

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

----- X

February 26, 2026
Start: 10:13 a.m.
Recess: 1:00 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING
ROOM 1

B E F O R E: Sandy Nurse,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Shaun Abreu
Oswald J. Feliz
Shahana K. Hanif
Lynn C. Schulman
Althea V. Stevens

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Crystal Hudson
Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate

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

Afua Atta-Mensah
New York City's Chief Equity Officer and
Commissioner

Dabash Negash
Deputy Commissioner

Linda Tigani
City Commission on Racial Equity

Rachel Nadelson

Tyrik Washington

Torian Easterling

Logan Clark
New York City Independent Budget Office

Madeline Neighly
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies

Roger L. Green
Coalition for a Democratic and Just New York

Rebekah Cook Mack
Legal Aid Society

Yvette Chen
Policy Associate at the Fair Housing Justice
Justice Center

Eugene Pursue
Former Permanent Rep of Grenada

Omar Thompson
New Harlem Renaissance

Y Jennings
Self

Lily Shapiro
Fortune Society

Christopher Leon Johnson
Self

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Testing, testing. This is a
3 microphone check for the New York City Council
4 Committee on Civil and Human Rights. Today's date is
5 February 26th, 2026. This is being recorded in
6 Hearing Room 1, 250 Broadway, and this is being
7 recorded by Sergeant Ben Levy.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. Welcome to
9 today's New York City Council hearing for the
10 Committee on Civil and Human Rights.

11 Please silence all cell phone electronic devices.
12 Moving forward, no one is to approach the dais.
13 Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. [GAVEL] Good
15 morning, everyone. I'm Council Member Sandy Nurse,
16 and I serve as Chair to the Committee on Civil and
17 Human Rights. This is my first hearing as Chair for
18 this Committee, so I first want to thank our
19 wonderful Committee Staff who were here at City Hall
20 very late last night for helping me to get into shape
21 on all things Civil and Human Rights Committee, and
also thank you to my deputy chief of staff, Fran, who
is here supporting me as well. We are here with
Council Members Lynn Schulman, Crystal Hudson, and I
saw Shaun Abreu around.

2 I wanna congratulate you, Commissioner, on your
3 appointment, and looking forward to working with you
4 and nice to meet you, Deputy Commissioner Negash.
5 Negash, I got it right? Okay. Also looking forward to
6 the discussion later with the Commission on Racial
7 Equity with Executive Director Linda Tigani, and
8 we'll hear also later from Logan Clark from the New
9 York City Independent Budget Office. So to everyone
else in the room, thank you for being here. Nice to
meet you all.

10 The Carter Reforms of 2022 established a biennial
11 cycle of racial equity planning and reporting in
12 conjunction with the city's budgeting- budget
13 planning process. This process is intended to connect
14 racial equity commitments to quantifiable
15 outcome-oriented metrics, including resource
16 allocation and consistent monitoring. In addition,
17 the Mayor and the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial
Justice, also known as MOREJ, must issue a cost of
living measure each year by March 31st.

18 This measure is intended to provide a more
19 realistic assess- estimate of the cost of living in
20 New York City compared to traditional cost of living
21 measures, so as to enable the finalized city budget

2 to more accurately account for New Yorkers' actual
3 needs and struggles.

4 Unfortunately, no racial equity plans or progress
5 reports have ever been issued. In my opinion, it is
6 one of the biggest failures of the Adams
7 Administration that he did not prioritize and produce
8 these plans. The Commission on Racial Equity, or
9 CORE, cannot fully perform its charter mandate
10 without a comprehensive, transparent, and measurable
11 set of REPs to evaluate. These Charter Reforms are
12 intended to promote transparency and accountability
13 for city government, and in not issuing them in a
14 timely manner, we risk further damaging the trust the
15 people of New York have in their government.

16 While I recognize that the timing of this hearing
17 means we are hearing from a brand new administration
18 with new appointments which has inherited the delays
19 of the previous one, the Adams Administration's
20 failure to comply with the Charter must not prevent a
21 transparent examination of the city's budget
preparations and negotiations for this year's budget.

Today, this Committee will be looking for an
update from MOERJ on its progress in bringing the
city into compliance with the Charter. The city has

1
2 been working on these plans for a while now, and
3 there should be plenty of action items and
4 recommendations that can be discussed today. Sharing
5 this information is key to the transparency and
6 accountability that are at the heart of the racial
equity planning process.

7 I also look forward to hearing from CORE about
8 its plans and capacity to evaluate the fiscal year
9 2027 budget with or without access to the city's
10 racial equity plans and true cost of living metric.
11 I'm hoping we can have a productive and meaningful
12 conversation about the progress and challenges of
this process to better understand how we can work
toward a more equitable city.

13 I want to reiterate that I'm looking forward to
14 working with everyone in this room. The goal is to
15 get the plans. The goal is to achieve racial equity.
16 I hope you can see the Council as a partner on this
17 and as a body to share in the problem solving where
18 we have challenges. And I will now pass it to
Committee Counsel to administer the oath.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Could you
20 please raise your right hands? Do you swear to tell
21

1 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
2 today before this Committee?

3 DABASH NEGASH: Yes.

4 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Oh, sorry. Yes.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. You may
6 begin.

7 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Good morning Chair Nurse,
8 Members of the Committees on Civil and Human Rights,
9 Members of the Council, and the public. My name is
10 Afua Atta-Mensah. Thank you. And I serve as New York
11 City's Chief Equity Officer and Commissioner of the
12 Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice.

13 I am pleased to be joined by Debash Nagash,
14 Deputy Commissioner, and other members of the MOERJ
15 team. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to
16 speak before this Committee today to properly
17 introduce myself, and to provide insight and
18 information about the work of the Office of Equity
19 and Racial Justice.

20 You know, prior to serving in this role, I had
21 the privilege of working with and on behalf of
low-income New Yorkers as an attorney with the Legal
Aid Society and with other legal services providers.
Thereafter, I worked for Community Voices Heard,

1 leading its efforts to build the power of communities
2 of color across New York, before going on to serve as
3 the Chief of Programs for Community Change, a
4 national power-building institution that provides
5 campaign advocacy, electoral, and policy support to
6 grassroots organizations across the country.

7 Most importantly, I am a New Yorker who believes
8 deeply in the transformative power of individuals who
9 come together for their communities, and I am
10 committed to building a just and equitable New York.
11 I think it is important to provide some background on
12 the Office of Equity and Racial Justice, which was
13 established as the city's centralized office that
14 takes on an intersectional approach to advance equity
15 across our city. Our mandate is rooted in a simple
16 but powerful belief that every New Yorker deserves
17 the opportunity to live, work, and thrive with
18 dignity.

19 To realize that vision, MOERJ brings together
20 several key initiatives and offices that work across
21 government to tackle inequities experienced by
communities in our city using various strategies from
policy and research to advocacy and programs,
including the Commission on Gender Equity, which

1 works to ensure our city leads in the development and
2 implementation of best practices in gender equitable
3 policies and programs. With a focus on economic
4 mobility, health, and safety.

5 The NYC Unity Project, which works to address
6 inequities amongst LGBTQ New Yorkers, particularly
7 youth, people of color, and TGN CNB people, as well
8 as the New York Men's Initiative and NYC Her Future,
9 sibling offices focused on addressing inequities
10 among young men of color and young women of color
11 respectfully—er, respectively— in education,
12 employment, health, and justice.

13 Our existence as an office is one that was guided
14 by the will of the people of the city. New Yorkers
15 overwhelmingly voted to embed racial equity and
16 justice in our city's charter, which included
17 documenting a vision and outlining a statement of
18 values to guide how we carry out the work of
19 government and serve the people, establishing the
20 infrastructure to advance equity, including the
21 creation of our office and the Commission on Racial
Equity, as well as development of the— of New York
City's first citywide racial equity plan. Plan and

1 ensuring we not only measure what it costs to meet
2 basic needs but to live with dignity in our city.

3 The previously mentioned foundational values in
4 the preamble of the City Charter have served as the
5 office's compass and urges all in government to
6 justly value all talents and contributions, ensure
7 the conditions for thriving for every person, and
8 embrace vigilance, remedy, and reconstruction.

9 As the office charged with implementing these
10 mandates, our team has continued to translate our
11 values into action and uplift these mandates with an
12 eye towards transforming government.

13 As I shared, an important part of the office's
14 work is developing and implementing the Citywide
15 Racial Equity plan, including individual agency uh,
16 racial equity plans every 2 years and progress
17 reports during off years.

18 According to our Charter, the city's plan should
19 include short and long-term goals, outcome measures,
20 and strategies to reduce racial disparities. The
21 Commission on Racial Equity works to ensure community
voice is integrated into the planning process,
sharing community equity priorities and outcome
indicators to inform the plan as it is crafted.

2 The MOERJ team designed a planning process aimed
3 at moving government towards equity and justice
4 together. This was not designed as a compliance
5 exercise, rather a unique opportunity for our city to
6 work together longer- work together toward
7 longer-term transformation.

8 Over 40 agencies and 200+ staff were engaged in
9 the process, and they were asked to review their
10 priorities relative to the foundational values of the
11 Charter, assess disparity data and community equity
12 priorities, and commute- create short, midterm, and
13 long-term goals and strategies that are responsive.
14 The office supported agencies throughout the process
15 of developing plans, leading full-day training
16 workshops developing planning tools to guide the
17 process, providing continuous support throughout the
18 process, including dedicated office hours and
19 one-on-one technical assistance.

20 As a living and active plan, we aim to continue
21 working together with city agencies and all
stakeholders to upend the ways in which structural
racism impacts our city.

Now, prior to embarking on the citywide racial
equity planning process, process that I previously

2 described, the office set up a framework to guide the
3 planning process and work to understand and build on
4 existing equity work across the city, explore the
5 approaches, successes, and challenges of other
6 localities advancing equity, including Philadelphia,
7 Dallas, and, and Chicago, and launch an Advisory
8 Board to guide the implementation of the Racial
9 Justice Charter Amendments, focusing on the Citywide
10 Racial Equity plan.

11 The board convened over a dozen members,
12 including local nonprofit leaders, civil rights
13 trailblazers, and former government leaders who
14 understand municipal operations. With that guidance
15 and support, the office was committed to building the
16 strategic framework necessary to not only advance
17 equity but support structural reform.

18 This required the office to ensure the framework
19 addressed the core levers of government so the plan
20 is sustainable. This meant centering things like
21 service delivery, staffing, contracting, and
budgeting from inception. This required integrating
these core levers into the process and with regards
to budgeting, working with agencies to consider if
and how they allocate funds in their budget to remedy

1
2 disinvestment and past harm as they contemplated how
3 to approach their agency's plan and begin to develop
4 it.

5 This can mean reallocating funds to meet the
6 needs of historically marginalized communities,
7 expanding services in key neighborhoods, experiencing
8 longstanding disparities, and more.

9 Given this is a living process and we will
10 continue to refine and add to work, MOERJ has also
11 continued to engage in equity and budgeting
12 discussions over the last year, including discussions
13 with academic institutions like the New School on the
14 development and implementation of equity and
15 budgeting tools, as well as attending and
16 participating in two events in 2025 co-hosted by the
17 New School Institute on Race, Power, and Political
18 Economy, and the NYC Commission on Racial Equity.

19 As we continue moving this process forward, we
20 are committed to collaborating with our budget
21 colleagues to integrate racial equity into the
budgeting process by continuing to move city agencies
to center equity in their own budget planning and
decision-making, as new needs are just a fraction of
the budget, and working with our City's Budget Office

2 to review agency requests with a lens that evaluates
3 if and how proposals advance equity.

4 As the Mayor shared on his 15th day in office,
5 our Administration is committed to releasing the
6 city's first Preliminary Racial Equity plan during
7 his first 100 days in office.

8 We look forward to releasing the Preliminary
9 plan, finalizing it with the input of the public, as
10 well as collaborating with our agency partners on
11 implementation, the measuring of progress, and
12 continuous improvements to eliminate racial
13 disparities.

14 As a city leader, 3 weeks into my role, I am
15 learning a lot about this office and its current
16 work. I also recognize this is a living plan and the
17 first release is preliminary, so there will be more
18 opportunity to make updates, including between the
19 publication of the prelim plan and the final plan,
20 which consists of a period for community feedback.

21 Chair Nurse, I want to thank you for providing
this space for this discussion, and I welcome any
questions you or Council Members may have.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you so much,
Commissioner. I'm also learning about your agency, so

1 we're going to do this together. We're just going to
2 start right off the bat, and if any Council Members
3 have questions, just let me know. We'll throw you on
4 the list.

5 The previous Administration, as we've said now,
6 we know they, they have failed to produce the plans,
7 but They did draft a complete Preliminary Racial
8 Equity plan. They cited that the City's Law
9 Department as an impediment to releasing it. We're
10 thankful that the Mayor plans to release it soon.
11 We're looking forward to that. We understand the
12 prior delays and setbacks are tied to the previous
13 Administration. Can you er, you know, give us more
14 insight into what obstacles remain to its immediate
15 release? So that the public can begin to provide
16 feedback?

15 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Uh, thank you for the
16 question. I, I would frame it this way. There are new
17 leaders coming into the Administration every day, and
18 part and parcel of what we are doing in meeting the
19 Mayor's mandate of ensuring this comes out within his
20 first 100 days is providing briefings and educating
21 these new leaders, as the staff in their agencies had

2 already been part and parcel of our plan to, to
3 create the, the plans for the individual agencies.

4 So we are taking this time to brief leaders so
5 that they are ready to move forward with their team
6 in implementation. We fully expect that we will have
7 this plan out within the 100-day period.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And so you— just to, to dive
9 in a little bit more, you, you've all looked at it,
10 the document. Do you— what, what can you say about
11 it? I mean, is it, is it terrible? Is it, is it
12 something that is in shape? I mean, could you just
13 give us a little more insight into what you— and, and
14 if the Law Department is the issue, can, can we hear
15 a little bit more about what their concerns would be?

16 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Again, I thank you for the
17 question. Let me frame it this way as well. I'm, I'm—
18 I think framing is important. This is a continuation.
19 It's living and breathing. So I have seen aspects of
20 the plan as each agency is, is in finalization and as
21 we brief leaders. There are larger pieces of the
federal landscape that have raised issues on on
equity. We are lucky that in the City of New York,
our Charter is clear and that we have a mandate that

1 we, we intend to abide by, and a Mayor who has made
2 clear that is his intention.

3 So we are moving forward with all deliberate
4 speed, and I would frame that this plan is the first.
5 It is preliminary. It is a work in progress, and, and
6 it is our intention to have a start and to be a part
7 of making this better. So it is an initial plan, and
8 we're going to continue to make progress. I want to
9 just provide some space for my deputy to add further.

10 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, thank you, Commissioner. I
11 would just also add, you know, the Commissioner
12 mentioned, you know, 200 staff across 40-plus
13 agencies that have been working on this plan. These
14 are folks who have spent a lot of time doing equity
15 work within their agency. These are folks who have
16 worked across multiple Administrations. They're the
17 people on the ground doing the real work, and those
18 are the people that have really shaped this plan and,
19 and continue to shape it with new leadership and
20 staff coming on board.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay we can dive further into
the plan in a little bit, but I do think
understanding what the legal issues would be or what
the Law Department's concerns would be would be

1 helpful. You know, we want to be partners in that and
2 we want to share in the problem. Sometimes we have
3 problems with the Law Department too. So you know,
4 it, it's helpful to clue us in.

5 To your knowledge, what efforts have been
6 undertaken so far to address the community equity
7 priorities, even in the absence of Citywide Racial
8 Equity plans?

9 DABASH NEGASH: Thank you for that question. So I
10 would mention two things here. I think number one
11 when we began the racial equity planning process in
12 2024 we intentionally ensured that the draft equity
13 pri- the community equity priorities, which at the
14 time were draft, were integrated into the assessment
15 process with agencies. So they were reviewing being
16 briefed by the Commission on racial equity ahead of
17 developing their plans. So we've really ensured that
18 that's been integrated from the start.

19 We're continuing to also look at the final
20 priorities which were published to really see,
21 particularly under this Administration, how we can
integrate that into some of our other work, whether
it be the Racial Equity plan itself or program
investments.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, uhm can you just talk a
3 little bit more about what integrating means? Uhm,
4 it's very broad uhm in terms of how that's filtering
5 down into agency - uh what the agencies put forward
6 when they're putting forward their pieces of the
7 Preliminary budget.

8 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, so let me speak to the
9 planning process first, just because, you know, the
10 Commissioner mentioned budgeting and equity and some
11 of these other core levers of government were
12 integrated into the process rather than treated as
13 separate pieces. In the beginning of the planning
14 process prior to starting to draft any plans we asked
15 agencies to really look at a few things to ensure
16 that prior to even drafting any ideas and outline for
17 their plans that they're considering some key pieces
18 of information.

19 And one of those things is the draft equity
20 community equity priorities. So prior to putting
21 ideas to paper, making sure that they understand
these are things that need to inform their plans,
before they're drafted and community equity
priorities were one of those things, along with

1
2 several other items we included during the assessment
3 phase.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And do you think over the
5 last year, for example, in the last cycle do you feel
6 like those were integrated into what people put
7 forward into their Preliminary Budgets?

8 DABASH NEGASH: I think they were inter- yeah, I
9 think they were integrated into commu- er, excuse me,
10 Preliminary Racial Equity plans. We also made an
11 effort to ensure that agencies were sharing with us
12 where community equity priorities aligned with the
13 goals within their plan to really ensure that we were
14 doing our part to, to hold our agencies and, and
15 ourselves accountable.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Despite uh- you kind of
17 answered this. To your knowledge, what kind of
18 staffing or infrastructure do city agencies currently
19 have for engaging in the Racial Equity planning
20 process?

21 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, I, I would- thank you for
the question. At the beginning of the Racial Equity
Planning process, we intentionally made an effort to
ensure that every agency formed a racial equity
planning team. We provided some criteria as well as

1 they crafted and, and pulled those teams together,
2 ensuring that they are diverse, ensuring that they
3 cut across different divisions of the agency so that
4 equity work isn't sitting with one particular team or
5 person. Uhm and then we've continued to— and we, we
6 will continue to do so under our current
7 Administration to refresh those teams, bring new
8 people in. And so those are the folks who have led
9 the process within their agencies to dra— craft their
10 plans.

11 That being said, every agency is also, you know,
12 within that team working with their larger agency to
13 ensure that the plan is informed by folks across the
14 board.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And how many— how many people
16 usually come— are— and I'm asking this because I'm
17 learning as we're going. So how many people are
18 typically a part of the Racial Equity Planning team
19 within an agency?

20 DABASH NEGASH: It varies by agency. It really
21 depends on how large or small the agency agency is,
so it could be a team of, you know, 5 or 6 people. It
could be a team of 10 or 12. It just varies based on
agency size.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And, and have the
3 agencies been proactive in working with you all to
4 develop Racial Equity plans, or do you set the
5 interactions?

6 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: So I can say it's a mix of
7 both. Right, so some are looking, are enthusiastic
8 where they are looking to partner immediately, and
9 some are looking for more guidance. But it is a
10 mutual relationship. If you want to speak to that
11 earlier.

12 DABBASH NEGASH: Yeah, absolutely, the
13 Commissioner's correct and you know, we, we have a
14 lot of agencies that are— what many of our agencies
15 are also just taking a lead role in their, in
16 drafting their plans with our guidance, with our
17 framework.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay and then given the delay
19 on the plan— on the Racial Equity plan, how is your
20 office ensuring that agencies will be sufficiently
21 funded to implement the plans when finalized?

DABBASH NEGASH: Thank you for the question. We so
at the— and I, I'm going back to the, the start of
the planning process because these are things is that
we have to, in order to achieve budget equity, we

2 have to integrate these things at the start of the
3 process rather than consider them as we, we move
4 through the budget process.

5 So as agencies were drafting their plans we
6 centered these what we call core levers of government
7 within our framework. Equity in budgeting is one of
8 those things. So as agencies were drafting their
9 plans, we really asked them to think about how they
10 should potentially reallocate funds to particular
11 neighborhoods, communities experiencing disparities.

12 So that's really integrated into their goals, and
13 they have to consider how they're using funds within
14 their own agency and, and do that at the start of the
15 process rather than, you know as we're, we're moving
16 through the, the budget season.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Through it. Yeah.

18 AFUA ATTA- MENSAH: Yeah. Correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Which is kind of makes me
20 wonder, like, how we're gonna account for that. I
21 mean, do you have agencies put forward and I, I, we,
we're all still diving into the prelim budget. It's
unrealistic for any of us to, to know everything here
about it, but have agencies put forth money to be

2 able to implement this plan once it's finalized, or
3 is that something that you anticipate in the exec?

4 So I'll start and then I'll, I'll allow my
5 colleague to add as well. So thank you for the
6 question. Again, I'd say it's a mix. Each agency is
7 doing both, you know, short, medium, and long-term
8 goals. And as they've been— as the Deputy
9 Commissioner mentioned, this was from the out— the
10 beginning of that process. And so most agencies have
11 as part and parcel of their agency budget those needs
12 as already part of what they've requested.

11 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah,
12 absolutely. Yeah, the Commissioner is absolutely
13 right. You know, because we asked agencies to
14 consider this from the start, they have to think
15 about how they're allocating funds within their own
16 budget, right? Because given new needs is just a, a
17 very small portion of, of the city's budget, uhm and
18 so they're considered— they're already considered
19 within their agency's budget. And if there are new
20 needs that, you know that— or if they're— they
21 require new needs, right, they would put that
forward. But again, like, we have to look at how

2 agencies are using the funds that they have and how
3 they're allocated. So that's done well in advance.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I just want to acknowledge we
5 have Council Member Feliz online and welcome Council
6 Member Hanif. So what I'm hearing is most agencies
7 have put forward some an- asked for an allocation to
8 be able to implement or integrate these plans when
9 they're finalized. Maybe some need, need some
10 encouragement. Is that what I'm hearing correctly?

11 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question.
12 That is correct. So as these plans- we go through the
13 process and we get community input and they become
14 finalized, there might be new needs.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And are you able to speak to
16 which agencies might need a nudge, or-

17 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question. I
18 would say Chair, that as this is a living document,
19 we will continue to learn in real time who needs some
20 assistance and I'm sure that we will make those needs
21 clear at that time.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, we can revisit that in
the prelim. I, I haven't had a, a full briefing
either, so what steps will you all take to ensure
that community feedback during the review process

2 will be incorporated into the final equity plan this
3 year?

4 DABASH NEGASH: Thank you. Uhm, we're very
5 excited about the, the community input that we expect
6 to receive on the plan. We feel strongly that
7 community input will actually strengthen the plan.
8 And our our aim is to ensure that as we receive that
9 feedback, whether it comes through the Commission on
10 Racial Equity, it comes to our office directly, it
11 comes from from elected officials, constituents, that
12 we bring all of that together, review it directly
13 with agencies, and then consider how during the
14 review period we can make adjustments and
15 modifications.

16 I would also add that, you know, to us, feedback
17 isn't feedback around the racial equity plan is not
18 necessarily er, set, you know, has a set timeframe.
19 We should be accepting feedback during implementation
20 with agencies as we're measuring progress and
21 publishing that and sharing that progress.

So, you know, to us it's not confined to a
particular time frame and it should be an ongoing
feedback loop.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I'll have any- and, and
3 forgive me if I, I'm, I'm still, you know, I'll say
4 it for the last time, I'm still learning, but will
5 you all be doing any separate activities from, for
6 example, CORE in terms of soliciting feedback from
the from New Yorkers?

7 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question.
8 We of course respect and are excited about the work
9 that CORE will be doing to engage the public, and
10 we'll also be doing outreach, right, to ensure, as
11 the Deputy said, that we are getting input and
12 comments at all levels and continuous and encouraging
13 that.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so that will be like
15 digital outreach or forum- in-person forums public
16 hearings. Do you have any idea what that might look
17 like?

18 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: So please, yeah. So I'd say we
19 would not be limited, right? The goal is to ensure
20 that community are, are hearing this, giving their
21 input, as the deputy said, we- and to make this
stronger, to help guide.

So that, that is the whole point. So if online,
in person in whatever manner, mechanisms that will

1 allow, and we'll be clearly learning and partnering
2 with CORE, who will be taking a lead on engaging
3 public.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. If possible, could you
5 provide us with any updates on the development of the
6 true cost of living measure?

7 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question. So
8 the, the mandated- the Charter has us required that
9 the true cost of living comes out by the end of March
10 and we will be meeting that goal to have that out and
11 published.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Uhm are you gonna be
13 building upon a, a plan drafted by the previous
14 Administration, or would you say you are starting
15 from scratch?

16 DABASH NEGASH: There's a true cost of living
17 measure that was already in development and so we are
18 working and building on that and are excited to, as
19 the Commissioner said, release it and, and also use
20 it to inform, you know, policy and the work that we
21 do.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Uhm, okay and then for the,
for the racial equity plan development, how many

2 MOERJ staff also worked on that under the previous
3 Administration who are carrying over to now?

4 DABASH NEGASH: Estimate that it's roughly maybe
5 a little under a dozen people.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

7 DABASH NEGASH: But I would also stress that, you
8 know agency plans are not simply developed by our
9 office, right? We create and craft the Citywide plan,
10 but the 40-plus agencies that have been involved in
11 the process, they're driving their plans driving plan
12 creation as well as implementation. And so the Racial
13 Equity plans that have been developed are not, you
14 know, simply developed by the, the 12 or, you know,
15 so people on our team.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay and are you in the
17 process of expanding staff? And if, and if so, do you
18 have any openings or titles or hiring timelines?

19 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question. So
20 we are in the process of hiring but also, as I
21 mentioned, coming into the office, looking at how
we're structuring to both work smart and hard. So
yes, we're hiring. Yes, there are some roles that
will be posted shortly and some are already up for

1 policy analysts and program managers and things of
2 that nature.

3 Some work on the plan, some work across our other
4 units and for some of the other functions for MOERJ.
5 Long story short, we're hiring.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, city, that- I mean,
7 that's great. It's great to see more staff supporting
8 and capacity supporting that work. We know that City
9 agencies also vary hugely, not only in size and
10 operational scope, but also in the kinds of equity
11 issues that arise around the course of their work.
12 What is the extent of MOERJ staff expertise in
13 different agencies? For example, how many staff have
14 backgrounds relating to policing or sanitation or
15 contracting, public housing, parks, social services,
16 etc.?

17 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question. So
18 our staff draws on years of experience across
19 multiple sectors, including government, nonprofit,
20 and, and private. And many team members also come to
21 work with backgrounds of living and/or working in
communities facing historic and systemic equalities-
inequalities. So such experience informs our

1
2 budget anal- analysis or key budget-related
3 processes?

4 DABASH NEGASH: We do, yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: How many?

6 DABASH NEGASH: May I get back to you on that? I
7 wanna give you an exact number, but we do have some
8 staff members with background in budgeting.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, great. Given the
10 implications for racial equity planning for budget
11 decisions, does MOERJ have any staff- uhm sorry, we
12 just asked that. What is MOERJ's assessment of the
13 extent to which budget planning and execution
14 currently undergo equity analysis, if at all?

15 DABASH NEGASH: Sorry, can you repeat the question
16 once more?

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: What is MOERJ's assessment of
18 the extent to which budget planning and execution
19 currently undergo equity analysis, if at all?

20 DABASH NEGASH: I think as the budget process
21 moves forward, we'll continue to work with our budget
colleagues to look at how equity is centered in the
budget. But again, I, I really do want to emphasize
that our, our focus can't be just be this con-
defined period of time, we have to work with agencies

2 on, on how they and focus on how they allocate
3 existing funds in order to ensure that budget equity
4 can be achieved. So it's really a combination.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. In identifying
6 performance and outcome indicators for citywide
7 racial equity goals, the office is charged with
8 developing standards for the disaggregation of data
9 by race, gender, and ideally such additional
10 categories as ethnicity, income, neighborhood, and
11 socioeconomic status.

12 Across which categories does the office plan to
13 track or gauge disparities in outcomes, and how were
14 these categories determined?

15 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Council Member, I'm not fully
16 clear on the— can you just ask the last part of the
17 question, please?

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah across which categories
19 does the office plan to track or gauge disparities in
20 outcomes, and how are these categories determined?

21 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: So I'll start and allow my, my
colleague to come in, right? So all of those areas of
disaggregated data, as you mentioned, are part and
parcel of what is being used. And so I'd say each

1 agency, right, has their own special areas. So it's-
2 there is not an overall one-size-fits-all.

3 It's- it's- some of this is agency specific and
4 again, those were- been part and parcel of ah, er,
5 for some time have been working with members of our
6 team in creating that.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And do you feel that the
8 city- that you have enough publicly available
9 information to conduct an equity analysis of the
10 budget?

11 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Sorry, can you repeat that?

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Does it in your view, does the
13 city have enough publicly available data or
14 information to conduct an equity analysis of the
15 budget?

16 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: I think we- the the city can
17 use the information that we have but I would also
18 just add that this work is ongoing and so we can
19 always continue to refine, identify gaps in data and,
20 and for us, that, that should really be a focus
21 across the city.

I would also just add, you know, in the first
planning cycle we considered existing data
disaggregation policies as well including Executive

2 Order 45 and the Social Indicators Report to really
3 help us also just think about where are there data
4 gaps and where we can directly support agencies
5 during the building of plans, but also to incorporate
6 and expand on disaggregated data efforts.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay and are you— do you plan
8 to use or have you used any data from the Mayor's
9 Office for Economic Opportunity, such as their
10 poverty measure, or social indicator and equity
11 reports?

12 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Sure. Thank you for the
13 question. Yes, the office leverages disaggregated
14 data from multiple sources, one of which being the,
15 the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Poverty
16 Tracker.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, great. Under the
18 Charter, CORE is entitled to 1 month's time to review
19 and respond to the City's Preliminary Racial Equity
20 plan so that both the plan and CORE's response to it
21 may be taken into consideration by the Council when
reviewing the Mayor's Preliminary Budget?

In the absence of the plans how will MOERJ ensure
that CORE has the opportunity to engage with the FY

1
2 2027 budget process to review its consistency with
3 the community equity priorities?

4 DABASH NEGASH: I think we're happy to work with
5 the Commission on Racial Equity in terms of just how
6 they approach their review. We're open to that, you
7 know, to collaborating and, and yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, can you speak to a
9 little bit more about how that would happen?

10 DABASH NEGASH: I think we would—

11 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Or the initiated— I mean, I'm
12 genuinely asking, I don't know.

13 DABASH NEGASH: Please go ahead.

14 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: I don't know. So I'm - thank
15 you for the question. I've already had the pleasure
16 of, of speaking with Executive Director Tigani. I am
17 sure that they will continue to be vocal in the need
18 and the right to be able to partner in this. And so
19 I, I want to note that that outreach has already been
20 extended and will be reciprocated and hopefully
21 ongoing.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Uhm and lastly, I, I,
for what I have, and please, colleagues, raise your
hands if you have any questions.

2 Among the office's duties is the stewardship of
3 the task force on racial equity, which identified 33
4 neighborhoods for cross-agency interventions based on
5 health and socioeconomic factors back in 2020. How
6 has this task force evolved in its programming and
7 its priority neighborhoods in view of changing equity
8 trends and needs? When will the office issue a
9 revised neighborhood list?

10 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, so thank you. The office
11 has, in the last couple years, really focused its
12 efforts in the, in the Bronx and has invested
13 programmatic funds in the Bronx in particular, just
14 because of the stark disparities in the borough under
15 the Mamdani Administration. We look forward to really
16 expanding the work of the task force and revisiting
17 the communities that are included on the task force
18 list.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Can you speak a little bit
20 more to what the investment was in the, in the Bronx?

21 DABASH NEGASH: Yep. So we have worked with the -
with NYCHA in particular making investments in food
business pathways, so really working to help support
entrepreneurs and then actually creating contracts

1
2 with them to actually provide food to community
3 members and help address food insecurity.

4 We're also working with them on some workforce
5 development programs as well as some financial
6 education and literacy.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, what about some of the
8 other neighborhoods? Is there outside of the Bronx?
9 At the moment, the, the Bronx has been the focus, but
10 there is a desire to expand that in the, in the
11 coming year.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, if you have anything
13 that you could share with the Committee on the work
14 of that task force we'd love to get that as a
15 follow-up, just to understand, you know, what the
16 work has been or, and what, what the plans are moving
17 forward. How often it's met. I'm not, I'm not sure if
18 there's any reporting that's associated with it, but
19 would love to just understand a little bit more. And
20 how many neighborhoods of those 33 are in the— were
21 identified in the Bronx?

DABASH NEGASH: Let me get back to you on that. I
want to get the exact number right. It's, it's
different in every borough, but I'm happy to follow
up.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I, I, and just this,
3 this task force has been ongoing for how many years?

4 DABASH NEGASH: It was launched in 20- in the
5 spring of 2020, so it's been almost 6 years.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and yeah, it would be
7 really good to know why only the Bronx has been
8 invested in if there's 33 neighborhoods identified
9 and what we could do there to make that better.

10 DABASH NEGASH: Absolutely, I'm happy to follow
11 up. I do want to just mention that the Bronx has been
12 the focus in the last few years. However, prior to
13 that upon the task force's launch and, and over the
14 first 4 to 5 years there were efforts, you know, over
15 \$200 million invested in the midst and, and, and,
16 after the pandemic in, in a number of communities
17 well outside of the Bronx.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Yeah, just a little more
19 information. Anything you could share would be great.

20 DABASH NEGASH: Of course.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I don't have any more
questions for you all. Colleagues, do you have any
questions for - Council Member Stevens, but you're on
the list as number 1. Okay.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay. Good morning. How
3 you guys doing? Well, I guess I'll, I'll just start
4 with the task force stuff. I just wanted some more
5 details. I know you said that you guys were working
6 in the Bronx and specifically on NYCHAs. Do you have
7 a list of the NYCHAs in the Bronx that you've been
8 working with?

9 DABASH NEGASH: We've been working with the
10 central off- one of the central divisions within
11 NYCHA, but we're happy to share a little.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Have you been working
13 directly with the residents, it's been more through
14 like the central- that's what you're saying?

15 DABASH NEGASH: We've worked with, yeah, central
16 agency staff. Our staff have volunteered and
17 supported different efforts, so we've been on the
18 ground. However, we've worked primarily with the
19 NYCHA staff.

20 That being said, I can follow up with a list of
21 different-

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And so, like, you've been
23 working with the NYCHA staff to then implement stuff
24 in the Bronx, and you don't know the list of NYCHAs
25 that you've been working with?

2 DABASH NEGASH: I can provide— if you're asking
3 about a list of developments, I'm happy to follow up
4 and provide a list of developments that have been
5 impacted by our programs.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, because that's,
7 like, very general, right? I'm a Bronx member, and
8 I'm concerned because I'm like, well, what has— what
9 is— what does this look like, right? And so I would
10 love more detail around, like, what NYCHAs you've
11 been working with and where they're located
12 throughout the Bronx? I think that would be really
13 helpful. And then also, I know you said it was like
14 workforce development and financial— could you go
15 into more detail about what that looks like? And you
16 said you've been— you guys have been doing this work
17 since 2020, correct?

18 DABASH NEGASH: Yes, the task force had— the, the
19 work of the task force has evolved over many years,
20 and it was between two different Administrations. So
21 again, there's there's work that has done— that, that
22 was done really like across all, all 30— all 33
23 neighborhoods rather than just the Bronx. I just—

24 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Well, I know I was just—
25 because you just stated that a lot of the work has

1
2 been done in the Bronx. And so I'm, I'm a Bronx
3 member, so I'm happy. I'm happy to hear work is being
4 done in the Bronx, but I would just love more detail
5 around, like, what has that workforce development
6 look like? And the financial literacy, could you give
7 more details about, like, what that was?

8 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, absolutely. So family
9 self-sufficiency is one of the programs we've
10 invested in. The focus is really as income is is
11 increasing, helping residents really save that money
12 rather than—

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And so that work that
14 you're doing, again, that's also done through NYCHAs,
15 and then they're doing it.

16 DABASH NEGASH: It's in— yeah, it's in collab—

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Look like— because I— and
18 I'm sorry, I just feel like it's very— it's too
19 general. I'm— I want to be in the weeds with this. So
20 what does it look like with the collaboration between
21 NYCHA and you? Could you just give like what— so
22 you're doing trainings with them, are you guys just
23 having conversations, and then how do you know that
24 information is being turned key to residents and to
25 the people who live there?

2 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, so we meet with the, the
3 staff at NYCHA who are doing the on-the-ground
4 implementation biweekly. Like I said, our staff has
5 also been on the ground and supported er, ah,
6 particular events and, and investments that have been
7 made through these programs. There have also been
8 partnerships with external vendors to help support
9 that work. So it varies by program, but I'm more than
10 happy to, if you wanna get into the weeds, which I'm
11 very excited to hear, I would be more than happy to-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I'm new to this Committee
13 and you probably don't know me, I'm always in the
14 weeds. So yes.

15 DABASH NEGASH: I love it.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I'm always gonna be
17 asking questions and gonna dig and like, let me know
18 how's this working? And then how are you evaluating
19 this work and the information with the staff? And I
20 know you said you guys have been there, but what does
21 the evaluation process look like?

DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, so we require annual
reporting with our partners at NYCHA, and then we
also take a look at, you know, what else maybe we
should be collecting.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So what is some of the
3 feedback that you've got from the annual reporting?

4 DABASH NEGASH: So, a lot of it has been around
5 what's been produced, deliverables community- number
6 of community members who have been served looking at
7 how the funding is being used, how we can improve
8 that if we continue the program.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Are you able to share
10 that information with Council? Because I would love
11 to see what these deliverables are and, and who we're
12 serving and all the information.

13 DABASH NEGASH: Absolutely. So I was just gonna
14 say, if you want to get into the weeds with me, which
15 I'm very excited about, I'd be more than happy to
16 follow up with you with some one-pagers that provide
17 not only descriptions of each of the programs that go
18 into detail, but information on what what, what the
19 impact has been and, and hopefully where we want to
20 go.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, absolutely. So I
would love to, to see that report, and I'm sure the
Committee would love to see that as well, because I
definitely will want to know, like, what that impact
looks like especially when it's saying that, like, a

1 lot of the work has been done in the Bronx, and me
2 being a Bronx member, not feeling it.

3 So I'm like, well, what development unit? Because
4 I got a couple of NYCHAs, would love to make sure my
5 residents are also getting this, this additional
6 support. And my next question is just around- I know
7 it was stated that especially because the, the racial
8 equity report hasn't been hasn't been released yet.
9 My question is just like, so what has the
10 collaboration thus far -because the Preliminary
11 Budget has been released, what does the collaboration
12 as we are waiting for it to come out has been done
13 between-with CORE to really be able to guide this
14 information?

15 Because I know it hasn't been released, but we do
16 know that there has been work that was done on it
17 from the last Administration. Have you guys been
18 working, like, closely in order to make sure that
19 these things are happening? What does the
20 collaboration thus far look like?

21 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question. So
the collaboration has just started with an engagement
and introduction to each other, and yet- and so it's-
I would see it as ongoing and needing to deepen,

2 right? But the— I see collaboration as starting with
3 an introduction, so that has happened. The focus has
4 been on trying to get the plan together, and there'll
5 be ongoing engagements both in presentations to CORE—
6 the CORE Commissioners and ongoing engagement as is
7 needed.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, I know— I know you
9 just got appointed, and so you're still trying to
10 figure things out. And so thinking about the cadence
11 moving forward, is that something you guys are
12 willing to do like meet weekly, monthly, annually?
13 Like, what does it look like especially because it
14 hasn't been released, the Preliminary Budget is
15 happening? And so what is the cadence that you're
16 looking to have between the agency to ensure that
17 equity is put in this budget moving forward?

18 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question. So,
19 the initial inquiry and as part of the introduction
20 was a request to continue in the rhythm that had
21 happened with the previous commissioner of biweekly,
and so that's been agreed to.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So you guys will be
meeting with CORE biweekly, and would that be you and
the agency? Is that also the MOCS director? Who would

2 be a part of these ongoing meetings to ensure that
3 equity is being part of it and CORE can hold up their
4 responsibility as being an oversight agency?

5 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question. So
6 I'd say one, the bare minimum is the— are these
7 biweekly meetings. And what I mean by that is I'm not
8 sure who is part of those. I know I will be there. I
9 know my Deputy will be there.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I know, she's my girl.
11 I could only be responsible for myself. Right.

12 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: So, and then we'll build out
13 from there. So I, I understand what I think is the
14 intent and the importance of the question and to
15 ensure that this is not just like a theory that
16 something is happening. But I also wanna say we are
17 not dogmatic to— I meant my thing. I said, right,
18 like this is gonna be built and so the minimum is the
19 biweekly weekly conversations, and whatever comes out
20 of those conversations of what's needed, the parties
21 who are part of those conversations will make
22 decisions therein and move accordingly.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: You know, I hear you, and
24 I just want to just— it's our job to push, to ask the
25 questions, to make sure that they're on record. And I

1 want to state that we know that you're going to be
2 there because that's what you're responsible for, but
3 I don't think that you should be the only one
4 carrying this water. And so I'm pushing that not only
5 you are there, but key players who are in this budget
6 process are also there, who are also negotiating with
7 us as well.

8 So I think that that's gonna be just as important
9 to make sure that equity is being seen throughout
10 this budget, especially people who are at the
11 negotiation table. That's all the questions I have.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I think I really
13 appreciate you digging in Council Member Stevens. I,
14 I guess to, to just ask bluntly, do you feel racial
15 equity will be addressed in this current budget cycle
16 that we are going through? Given that we are going to
17 get the plans Post-Preliminary Budget conversations,
18 and these agencies have their racial equity teams.
19 But how, how— what will we— what will operationally
20 be done to ensure what comes out of a plan that won't
21 be finalized, it'll just be like a draft gets put
into this Executive Budget that will be adopted July
1st? Or June 30th?

2 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for the question and,
3 and and for you know, lifting up the importance of,
4 of ensuring that this budget is not just in word but
5 it also has information that meets with the mandates
6 about equity.

7 And so part of what I can do is restate what was
8 early said about even in the process within the
9 different agencies, right, so that it's not just at
10 the last stage, but as part and parcel of how they
11 are looking on implementation so that budget equity
12 and budgeting is throughout. And as, again, as a
13 Preliminary Plan is released and input is sought,
14 there'll be changes, and that we are part of— our
15 role is to ensure and to work together to ensure that
16 there is funding that meets the demands of what's
17 outlined by the agencies.

18 So what I know is that this process has already
19 started and I, and I'm also well aware that there
20 will be, as it should be, accountability from the
21 Council and others to ensure that we go as far as we
can and to be pushed further.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay uhm, Council Member
Hanif.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chair Nurse. And
3 hi, it's great to see you. Thank you for being here
4 with us. I'd like to first start off, and maybe this
5 was answered because I was late. What specific
6 components of the Racial Equity Planning process are
7 currently delayed, and which agencies are— have
8 failed to meet those benchmarks?

9 DABASH NEGASH: Thank you for the question. So
10 let me just step back for pieces of, of my earlier
11 testimony. No agencies have failed to, to meet
12 anything, so I, I want to just take a framing of a
13 fault.

14 We are moving forward under the mandate that the
15 Mayor laid of having the plan out within the first
16 100 days. And so we are— all of the agencies are
17 continuing to work forward— to move forward, excuse
18 me. As new leaders are joining the Administration, we
19 are updating and briefing them so that those leaders
20 are ready to implement the plans that their— the
21 staff on the respective agency teams have started,
and working to finalize those plans.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Could you just clarify the
piece about agencies not failing? What are the
agencies supposed to do? What— could you just walk me

2 through the role of the agencies in terms of getting
3 er, that process?

4 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: I'll start and then I'll let my
5 colleague continue. Thank you for the question. My
6 response of not failing was a- is a response to your,
7 like, who's not meeting, so I wanted to make clear
8 that no agency has been delayed or is doing
9 something- that, that was what I was referring to.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Like, you're saying
11 agencies are on track?

12 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: They've delivered. Correct.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then- oh, did you-
14 please, you wanted to- did you want to add anything?

15 DABASH NEGASH: No.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: For the community
17 engagement cycle, could you share what percentage of
18 participants are from historically under-resourced
19 neighborhoods and how you're ensuring accessibility,
20 particularly for folks with disabilities, language
21 access issues, childcare needs?

DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, I would just start by saying
the Commission on Racial Equity really leads the
process on community engagement. So I, you know, I
know that the Executive Director and Chair will, will

1
2 be up here soon speaking to that. But as the
3 Commissioner said, we look forward to also receiving
4 feedback directly from the public. And we look
5 forward to taking that feedback and ensuring that in-

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then I'd like to know
7 if any program was redesigned or defunded because it
8 was found to exacerbate inequities.

9 DABASH NEGASH: Sorry, can you repeat the
10 question?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Were any programs defunded
12 or redesigned because inequities were found?

13 DABASH NEGASH: Within the the- are you
14 referencing the Racial Equity plan, if you don't mind
15 me asking?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yeah.

17 DABASH NEGASH: Well, the the plan is, you know,
18 it's been something that's in development and and not
19 something that has been released quite yet but there
20 there's nothing that, you know, that we are aware of
21 that, that's been defunded. But like I said, the plan
is, you know, is, is a document. It's a living,
breathing document. It's in development and, you

2 know, that's something we can continue to evaluate
3 with- upon its release and implementation.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I guess I'll clarify. What
5 will, what will the Racial Equity Report entail?
6 What will, what will be in the report? And is, is
7 there a goal for making changes within agencies'
8 specific programs or where inequities were found?

9 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, I'll start and, and com-
10 I'm- I'll invite my Commissioner to jump in. So each
11 plan includes goals, outcomes, strategies, and
12 indicators. And every agency plan- there's 40-plus
13 agencies who have developed plans with, with about
14 200-plus staff and each plan will have goals,
15 outcomes, strategies to implement those strategies
16 for implementation, as well as indicators. There will
17 be opportunity not only through the community
18 engagement process to hear from the public to ensure
19 that it informs the plans, but we expect as well
20 during implementation, our office as well as agencies
21 will be receiving feedback and, and see that as you
22 know, there's an ongoing feedback loop.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. So right now it's
24 not like an evaluation of-

25 DABASH NEGASH: Correct-

1 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: City agencies. The city
2 agencies are, are preparing their plan.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I broke it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Technical difficulties.
5 That's what we got over here.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Sorry.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Oh wait, it's working.
8 There you go. It— this is working, right? It's just
9 not— the light's not on.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Oh, it's working.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, the lights are on.
12 Okay. All right, go ahead.

13 DABASH NEGASH: In answer— correct. Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That the agencies are
15 preparing their plans?

16 DABASH DEGASH: Correct. Preparing and finalizing.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then what's the— what
18 comes next?

19 DABASH DEGASH: So the, the Preliminary Plan is
20 released, and then there's the public process for
21 input and engagement, and then taking that input and
engagement, there— a final plan is made.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And the engagement is
3 trying to obtain what kind of information? Was that
4 my time?

5 DABASH NEGASH: I'm happy to jump- yeah, I'm happy
6 to jump in. That, that, that includes feedback from
7 the public on the preliminary version of the plan. So
8 as I mentioned, every plan includes goals, outcomes,
9 strategies, and indicators. We expect to hear from
10 the public about what's included in the plan, each
11 plan.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Could you just give me one
13 example so I can visualize? Like what agency- like
14 what's the agency is making the report, it's going
15 into the community. Could you just walk me through,
16 like, specifically which agency, and then how the
17 public is responding, and, and then what comes after
18 that?

19 DABASH NEGASH: Sure. So I'll just start from the
20 beginning. Agency- we work with agencies to draft
21 racial equity plans.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So hypothetically-

DABASH NEGASH: So there's one yeah, so there's
for- if we have 40+ agencies, each of them have their
own individual plan, which is rolled up into a

2 Citywide Racial Equity Plan. We work with them on the
3 development, finalizing that plan. We are the ones
4 who release the citywide plan to the public and then
5 the Commission on Racial Equity, who I know you guys
6 will hear from, will step in also and over a 30-day
7 period collect and share public feedback. As well as
8 their feedback with the Administration, the Council.
9 And then we expect within a roughly 70-day period to
10 review that feedback that we receive from the public,
11 use it to inform any modifications or updates to the
12 plan, maybe as a whole, right? It depends on the
13 feedback, or it may be a feedback on a particular
14 agency's plan. And then we use that feedback to
15 inform any updates, issue a final plan.

16 The Commission also provides an evaluation of the
17 final plan and then we continue with implementation.
18 So feedback can- we know this is our first time going
19 through the process, right, so-

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: This is why I'm very
21 curious.

DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, we don't know.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Could you say- could you
like hypothetically say - small businesses? Name-

1
2 could you name an agency that like- like walk me
3 through what exactly is-

4 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah so-

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: one agency doing. So among
6 the 40 agencies, could you just name some agencies
7 that are going to be- are, are already a part of the
8 process?

9 DABASH NEGASH: Yeah, it- go ahead.

10 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: If it works for you, because we
11 have 40-plus agencies as part of this process, I'm
12 happy to share agencies that are part of the process
13 and share a list if that's helpful, following this
14 this hearing.

15 We have-

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Because I'm trying - I'm
17 sorry, I'm trying to understand, like, when the final
18 plan is produced, what is it informing? And is it to
19 inform the budget dynamics and programs within each
20 of these agencies? Or- so that's what I'm really
21 trying to understand. I don't know if Council Member
Nurse-

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I hear what you're saying. The
question is Small Business Services, this is what's
out of their racial equity plan. The community has

1
2 responded, has given you feedback, you've amended it,
3 mhm, now the plan is out. What will be different in
4 Small Business Services, if you could say, like, what
an expected change would be? Thank you.

5 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: So, thank you. Thank you for
6 the question. Thank you for the clarifications. Thank
7 you all for your patience in our answering this.

8 So, so I think part of our, our struggle is,
9 again, each agency is different, but let's take this
10 hypothetical, right? Ideally, if a person is- wants
11 to raise pieces and give feedback as part of, like,
12 how SBS is taking it, that would be incorporated into
13 the final plan, and that would have either some shift
14 or dynamic to how their process or their programs are
15 implemented, whether- right? But part of- this is all
16 part and parcel of an ongoing process, and so the
17 goals are with- from each of the plans- from each of
the agencies, rather- deal with how their programs
are implemented, how they engage and deal with New
Yorkers.

18 So some aspects may be about how, and resources
19 are distributed. If it's about sub-granting, how
20 programs are being done. So it, it is on a
21 case-by-case basis. But to your point, ideally their

2 input would shape how resources are set and/or how
3 programs are delivered to ensure those constituencies
4 receive it in the way they need.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. And then what would
6 the evaluation look like? Is there an evaluation
7 process after that annually, or—

8 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: So, the Charter has, after the—
9 every 2 years that the plan is released, and then the
10 off years is updates about metrics on, on how those
11 recommendations that each of the agencies have put,
12 how they're moving forward in those goals.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: No, that's really helpful.
15 Thank you for that line of questioning. I wanted to
16 recognize— we have some dignitaries in the house.
17 Former Ambassador of Grenada Aiden Persu, is here
18 with us. Thank you for joining us.

19 Oh, oh, okay, well, blame the Public Advocate
20 because I'm reading what's on this Post-it, okay? I
21 told him I'm not learning informal assembly— Former
Assembly Member Roger Green. Thank you for being
here. And actually I don't have any other questions
on deck, so I'm going to give the floor to the Public
Advocate to make a statement.

2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so much,
3 Madam Chair, and my apology. I mentioned the
4 Ambassador's brother by accident. I mixed them up.
5 They do look alike, but I knew it was him. My bad.

6 Thanks again and for giving me an opportunity to
7 say an opening statement in the middle of the
8 hearing. I appreciate it. Uh I appreciate you. As
9 mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams, Public
10 Advocate for the City of New York. I wanna thank
11 Chair Nurse and the members of the Committee on Civil
12 and Human Rights for holding this very important
13 hearing. And I'm excited to see Commissioner Afua
14 Atta-Mansah and Deputy Commissioner here as well.

15 I'm glad to see you in those positions and I'm
16 also glad to see members of CORE here as well,
17 Commissioner and their members.

18 We the people of New York City declare that our
19 city is a multiracial democracy and that our
20 diversity is our strength. Hmm. So begins the
21 preamble to New York City's Charter, the document
that declares our city's fundamental values and
governmental functions.

In 2022, New Yorkers voted overwhelmingly to add
this preamble to the Charter, which continues. We

2 strive to be a city where equity and inclusiveness,
3 community empowerment, accessibility, and opportunity
4 for every New Yorker are, are unwavering standards to
5 which we are held accountable in all aspects of our
6 governance. And again, I know some of this was
7 probably covered. I just want to make sure my name is
8 attached to these words as well, so I appreciate the
9 opportunity.

10 On the same day in 2022, New York City voters
11 codified the Independent Commission of Racial Equity
12 CORE and a true cost of living metric, which together
13 aim to put the values articulated in the Charter
14 preamble into practice.

15 This tasked the Mayor with developing and
16 releasing biannual Racial Equity plans and true cost
17 of living metric by mid-2024 and updating these plans
18 every 2 years to align with the release of the
19 Preliminary City Budget.

20 Unfortunately, the previous Mayor, who I believe
21 intentionally failed to live up to his
Charter-mandated obligation, and released neither. By
now we should have the original and updated versions
of both the plans and metrics. Instead, CORE had to

1 sue the previous Administration over its illegal and
2 immoral failures, one of many.

3 Two independent organizations, the Federal-
4 Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies and the
5 Urban Institute, took it upon themselves to create a
6 True Cost of Economic Security, or TCES, metric that
7 reflects many aspects of the Charter-mandated
8 measures.

9 Following the TCES measure, the median New York
10 City family with children would have to earn
11 \$163,000- \$165,300 per year to be economically
12 secure. This is \$52,600 more than the median New
13 York City family actually makes. This already
14 enormous disparity is even worse for New Yorkers of
15 more color. Using the TCES metric, 43 percent of
16 White New Yorkers are economically insecure, but for
17 Asian, Black, and Latino New Yorkers, that percentage
18 stands at 63 percent, 68 percent, and 78 percent,
19 respectively.

20 These disparities are geographic too. 50 percent
21 of New Yorkers in Manhattan versus 80 percent in the
Bronx, and the richest in the city- country- I'm
sorry, the richest city in the richest country in the
world history of the world, it is a shame that any-

2 anyone struggles to meet their basic needs, and that
3 after many decades of progress, New Yorkers of more
4 color face this burden so disproportionately.

5 It will take a whole-of-government approach to
6 shrink racial economic disparities, ensuring every
7 New Yorker can comfortably access their basic needs.
8 We often say that budgets are moral documents.
9 Releasing the racial equity plans and true cost of
10 living metric will be a next step towards a city
11 budget reflecting the morals outlined in the city
12 Charter.

13 I am encouraged by our Mayor's focus on
14 affordability, and my hope is that the Administration
15 will keep its promise to release the Racial Equity
16 Plans within the first 100 days so that future city
17 budgets can operationalize our commitment to ending
18 racial inequities.

19 I look forward to the hearing testimony on those
20 topics from the Commission on Racial Equity, from the
21 Mayor's Office of Racial- of Equity and Racial
Justice, and former members of the public.

I also want to mention that the, the problems
that we're in were designed with race in mind, so the
solutions have race in mind. And it always shocks me

1 so much that people push back on that notion. And
2 particularly, I wanna talk about anti-Blackness,
3 'cause that is a very particular thing that is in the
4 root of so many of this, and for some reason when we
5 do that people get a little frustrated. But it is
6 necessary to talk about anti-Blackness. It's
7 necessary to discuss the problems and solutions
8 around anti-Blackness. And the insidiousness of
9 anti-Blackness is that they don't want you to talk
10 about it, and they act like something's wrong when we
11 talk about the solutions the same way we did design
12 the problem.

13 So with that, thank you. I'm looking forward to
14 hearing more, and I really hope that the Mayor does
15 decide to release this sooner than later. And lastly,
16 I do want to say there's been a lot of kerfuffle
17 around some of the talks around the, the property tax
18 hikes, which I, I don't support and is part of, I
19 think talking about equity but the real answer to
20 that, and I want to make sure I'm on the record, is
21 that Governor has the opportunity and the ability to
raise revenue from the wealthiest New Yorkers, and we
should not protect the 33,000 New Yorkers against the
millions and millions who will suffer if we don't do

2 that. Even if we cut services, it's going to be the
3 same communities that are going to be impacted. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Public Advocate,
6 and thank you both for, for this opening hearing. I
7 will just say as I become more familiar, I, I
8 appreciate more detailed answers and just less broad.
9 I understand for you, I understand, but for folks
10 who've been here, the people who are on this
11 Committee usually want more and they want to
12 understand more.

13 And so you know, this isn't- this is a nice
14 opening, but we, we usually get more granular. But I
15 appreciate you all being here. Looking forward to
16 partnering with both of you and making sure this
17 happens and thank you.

18 So now we are going to bring up the Executive
19 Director of CORE Linda Tigani.

20 AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you. I'm gonna have
21 someone from my team stay.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

AFUA ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And I will now turn it to the
Committee Counsel to, to administer the oath.

1 UNIDENTIFIED: We have a -

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: A couple more people, okay.
3 And I don't have everyone's names here, but I will-
4 okay, thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Uh-oh, oh, there it is. Ah,
6 hmm, hmm, hmm. Good morning. If everyone could raise
7 their right hands, please. Do you swear to tell the
8 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
9 before this Committee?

10 LINDA TIGANI: Yes.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. Please
12 begin.

13 LINDA TIGANI: Great. Okay, good morning Chair and
14 members of the Civil and Human Rights Committee. My
15 name is Linda Tajani, and I have the honor of serving
16 as the Chair and Executive Director for the New York
17 City Commission on Racial Equity.

18 I lead CORE in partnership with 13 commissioners
19 and 15 staff members. New York City CORE is a product
20 of the 2022 ballot measure that to introduce- that
21 introduced to redress longstanding racial disparities
in power, access, and opportunity.

And that's enabled and perpetuated whether by
design or implementation or impact through city laws,

2 regulations, policies, and practices. To approach
3 this goal, the Racial Justice Commission proposed
4 that a body be established for the purpose of holding
5 government accountable for advancing racial equity
6 and increasing community voice to influence city
7 decision-making through the development of priorities
8 for racial equity in government operations.

9 New York City CORE exercises this accountability
10 function first and foremost through oversight of a
11 Citywide Racial Equity plan outlining goals and
12 strategies for reducing racial disparities in social
13 and economic well-being. Among other requirements,
14 the plan is meant to map existing needs by
15 neighborhood so that individual agencies can target
16 services and policies accordingly.

17 The data furnished by the Racial Equity plan
18 should provide the public with the information
19 necessary to enable community members to hold
20 agencies publicly accountable for progress.

21 A year ago, I sat here and reported in detail on
New York COREs' New York City COREs' role in an
effort to advance the 2024 and 2025 Racial Equity
planning cycle. I described the delays in launching
and staffing the Commission and New York City COREs'

1
2 determination to initiate the planning process
3 through the development of community equity
4 priorities in consultation with over 4,000 New
5 Yorkers, and I urged the city to honor the will of
6 the electorate and the letter of the law by releasing
7 the long overdue inaugural Racial Equity plan.

8 Since then, not only has the 2024 and 2025 plan
9 failed to materialize, but this dereliction has set a
10 precedent for inaction that continues to this day
11 with the city's violation of its duty to release the
12 Preliminary plan for 2026 and 2027.

13 In what has become a re- regrettable pattern, New
14 York City CORE has once again met its obligation to
15 propose priorities based on needs voiced by community
16 members historically underrepresented in or
17 underserved by government, and to suggest metrics for
18 tracking the outcomes they seek.

19 In addition to standardizing the process through
20 which we partner with community groups to to solicit
21 such, such input, we expanded the scale of our
22 outreach, doubling our survey response yields to just
23 short of 10,000 New Yorkers.

24 Our timely release of the community equity
25 priorities, however, failed to prompt either the

1
2 previous or the current Administration to incorporate
3 these priorities into a plan comprising citywide
4 goals and strategies to improve improve racial equity
5 throughout city government's policymaking,
6 operations, and workforce, including the equitable
7 distribu- distribution of benefits, of support
8 services, and of environmental burdens by
9 neighborhood, as required by the Charter.

10 Well, I appreciate Mayor Mamdani's acknowledgment
11 of the previous Administration's negligence in this
12 regard and his accompanying commitment to releasing
13 the Preliminary plan in mid-April. I must
14 respectfully reiterate that this departure from the
15 Charter-prescribed timeline undermines the central
16 purpose of Racial Equity Planning process: to align
17 the city spending priorities with the needs voiced
18 and outcomes sought by its most ill-served
19 communities, or as we refer to them as near- at New
20 York City CORE, as communities harmed by racism and
21 social injustice.

18 It bears noting that the same principle of
19 universal bounty driving the Mayor's affordability
20 platform also undergirds New York City COREs' mandate
21 to monitor the city's progress in delivering to all

2 residents the power, access, and opportunities they
3 need to thrive.

4 In fact, our 2026 community engagement cycle
5 revealed that the cost of basic needs as quality
6 food, transportation, healthcare, and housing to be
7 the most urgent of all equity priorities, a finding
8 reinforced through the published data on existing
9 racial disparities in access to these resources.

10 Unfortunately, the city's delinquency in
11 producing the Preliminary Racial Equity plan has been
12 compounded by a similar abdication of its mandate to
13 release a true cost of living measure.

14 Reflecting the level of investment necessary to
15 allow New Yorkers to thrive. Collectively, their
16 absence, absence impairs the accuracy with which
17 agencies can assess the cost of bridging longstanding
18 racial gaps in health, wealth, and well-being.

19 It is precisely this need to evaluate and
20 eliminate the distance between the abundance that the
21 Mayor regards as the due of every New Yorker and the
lived reality of different demographic groups that
prompted the creation of a Racial Equity planning
process, in which the Mayor and individual agencies
set forth strategies to improve outcomes for New

1
2 Yorkers harmed by racism and propose indicators to
3 measure progress.

4 To ensure that this process is accompanied by a
5 meaningful allocation of resources –instead of merely
6 serving as a symbolic exercise, it was designed
7 intentionally to sync with the citywide budget
8 process.

9 Heartened though New York City CORE was by the
10 establishment of a new cabinet office for economic
11 justice, coupling the city's economic growth with its
12 protections for residents harmed by discrimination,
13 the acknowledgement it implies of the inextricability
14 of economic and racial justice is undermined by the
15 absence of a Racial Equity Plan, its counterpart to
16 the Preliminary Citywide Budget.

17 Again, this pairing is essential to fulfilling
18 the vision of Section 3403 of the Charter to compel
19 the city and its agencies to examine their existing
20 programs and embed racial equity goals not only into
21 their operations, but more significantly into their
budget allocation.

Apart from being a critical aspect of the city's
economic justice agenda, racial equity planning is a
matter of law. For over 2 years, New York City CORE

1
2 has battled to fulfill its mandate with which we were
3 entrusted by the voters, and each day the city
4 obstructs our ability to exercise our oversight,
5 diminishes our credibility with community and erodes
6 their trust in government.

7
8 If ours is to be a government of laws and not of
9 political whim, then we can no more disregard the
10 racial equity planning timeline than the budget
11 schedule. Just as each new Administration must
12 immediately produce a Preliminary Budget prior to
13 adjusting it in the months to follow, so too must it
14 abide by the corresponding requirement to release a
15 Preliminary Racial Equity plan at the start of the
16 term and then refine it as needed over the course of
17 the season.

18
19 While the correlation between these two duties
20 led New York City Core to propose that the new
21 Administration receive the same one-month extension
22 on the later deadline as on the former, February
23 16th, ultimately brought the sub- submission of the
24 Preliminary Budget alone.

25
26 New York City CORE applauds Mayor Mamdani's
27 actions to restore the rule of law with respect to
28 the city's sanctuary status and urges the

1 Administration to demonstrate similar resolve in
2 upholding the Charter's Racial Equity provisions.

3 We look forward to working with the Mayor and
4 Commissioner Atta-Mensah to realize the Charter's
5 vision of a city where the value, talents, and
6 contributions of every New Yorker are recognized and
7 embraced, and where equity and inclusiveness,
8 community empowerment, accessibility, and opportunity
9 for every New Yorker are unwavering standards to
10 which we are held accountable in all aspects of
governance, business, and service delivery.

11 Thank you so much for allowing me to testify. I
12 also just want to acknowledge I'm here with my two
13 colleagues, Rachel Nadelson and Tyrik Washington, and
14 one of our Commissioners, Torian Easterling, has also
joined us today.

15 We will now be able to take questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Great, thank you and thank
17 you for being here. We're just going to get right
18 into it. Why don't you just tell us about how the
19 continued delay of the plan and the true cost of
20 living measure has impacted your work and ability to
21 engage in the budget process and whether you think
that any of the outcomes or goals of, of the

1 original— of your mission will even be reflected in
2 this year's Executive Budget.

3 LINDA TIGANI: Thank you for the question. So it
4 is, it's unclear right now, like, what the goals and
5 strategies are of the agencies. Because it's— the
6 plan, to our understanding, has been under legal
7 review, extended legal review now for over a year.
8 This hampers both the city's ability to actually
9 follow the law and ensure that the city's budget
10 aligns with racial equity goals and plans, and it
11 also prevents CORE from ensuring that community voice
is a part of government decision-making.

12 So it is required that once the plan is released—
13 and I do— sorry, I wanna take a step back because I
14 think it's important to note that the Racial Equity
15 planning process begins with the submission of
16 community equity priorities. It begins with the
17 submission of the people's voice to tell city
agencies and the Mayor's team what are the
priorities.

18 And we have over 10,000 New Yorkers who
19 identified 18 community equity priorities and CORE
20 has met our statutory deadline for every single
21

1
2 planning cycle. So the cycle has started and has
3 halted with the Mayor's team.

4 With that said, it means that there, to our
5 understanding, is no equity framework that is guiding
6 OMB's review of new needs requests or requests to use
7 underspend. There is no guidance to city agencies
8 indicating what neighborhoods should get what
9 services or what types of investment.

10 There's no guidance to reallocation. At one point
11 in our city's history, we use the Tree 33
12 neighborhoods as an organizing model around new
13 needs, and we no longer do that. And that's because
14 the Racial Equity plan should have replaced that.

15 So that means that we are once again at risk of
16 continued disinvestment in key neighborhoods across
17 the city, key program services in target areas. And
18 we are also then at risk of preventing the public as
19 well as the Commission on Racial Equity from holding
20 the city accountable to what is the law.

21 It is required that the city look at investments
per neighborhoods on a hyperlocal level. And to our
understanding, there is no framework or process that
OMB or city agencies are using at the current moment
to do that work and as we all know, budget season has

1 started. And in fact, new needs requests for the
2 Executive Budget are due in 2 weeks.

3 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right.

4 LINDA TIGANI: And so we have no plan.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right and so I understand
6 there's a new Administration and I, I, I agree with
7 you it's unclear to me what— and I, I'm still trying
8 to figure out how all the mechanisms work, but it's
9 unclear to me what the— what interactions are
10 happening within these agencies to come up with, you
11 know, how, how we're gonna quickly— when the plan is
12 released quickly integrate recommendations or
13 proposals into the Executive Budget.

14 Can you provide any update on how you all have
15 started working with MOERJ since the new year?

16 LINDA TIGANI: Sure. So just as Commissioner
17 Atta-Mensah said, we have met and spoken now a few
18 times. I have also worked closely with her deputy
19 when her deputy worked with under Saadia Sherman.
20 Excuse me. We are in the pro— early process of our
21 relationship. We are gonna be meeting biweekly. I
have shared with her our concerns around the lengthy
legal review and the fact that the Charter does not

1
2 actually call for a legal review, that this is in
3 fact a draft plan.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Uhm, mmm.

5 LINDA TIGANI: It is intended to be adjusted,
6 edited, particularly by the people's voice, which is
7 right now being prevented. And so we have shared our
8 concerns about what has happened previously. We— I
9 have shared information on the lawsuit. The lawsuit
10 is still an active lawsuit. And so we are hoping that
11 we are able to resolve this with a release of the
12 plan.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Did you ever receive a, a, a
14 memo or some kind of legal briefing on why they opted
15 for a the Law Department to do a review?

16 LINDA TIGANI: We've never received anything in
17 writing on why they opted.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I, yeah, I was curious
19 because when uhm — not to be too off topic, but
20 different legislation that the Council has tried to
21 put forward in the last couple of years, there has
22 been caution around racial equity language in the
23 bill because of the Trump Administration and the
24 targeting of those programs and potential cuts and
25 those, you know and so I was just curious if perhaps

2 there was anything said to you all about maybe why
3 and if it was tied to the federal government at all.

4 LINDA TIGANI: Well, we have had conversations—
5 excuse me— under the previous Administration where
6 they did raise particular concerns, not— and this is
7 not conversations with the Law Department, this is
8 conversations just with the Adams Administration,
9 where they particularly did raise concerns around the
10 shift in the United States when Trump came in.

11 We had raised these concerns as well because the
12 original plan was to get the 2024 and 2025— 2024 and
13 2025 plan done, the full cycle done before Trump was
14 inaugurated. And their delay then moved the planning
15 into post-inauguration, and then the - then we
16 started to see all of the Executive Orders. So the
17 concerns were only made verbal, and it was with
18 Adam's Admin.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Got it. I'm just gonna ask,
20 like, 2 more questions before I open up to my
21 colleagues and then I'll come back but I know that
22 you all went through a process of identifying these
23 community equity priorities with community groups.

24 LINDA TIGANI: Correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Now those— now there's a new
3 set of community equity priorities that you're about
4 to identify, right? You're getting ready to start
5 that cycle again, or you've generated—

6 LINDA TIGANI: We have done that.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So now the, the first
8 one, we don't— we— the questions we asked about, you
9 know, how were those previous ones implemented into
10 city agency work or previous budgets. I, I left
11 unclear about how that actually— what that was. I
12 think I put even a note, go reread the transcript,
13 because I'm unclear what was said. And so what does
14 that mean for the second— the second priorities? And
15 how will— how do you imagine they will be
16 incorporated into to work this year within the city?

17 LINDA TIGANI: So the first and second pri— the
18 first cycle and second cycle priorities remain the
19 same because there was no action done for the
20 2024-2025 plan.

21 So the 18 community equity priorities remain.
22 What we have done in between two cycles is we went
23 from working with 30 organizations to 70
24 organizations. 4,212 New Yorkers in the first cycle
25 to just short of 10,000 New Yorkers in the second

1 cycle. Those New Yorkers include people as young as
2 11 years old. Our work was produced in 14 different
3 languages so that people could provide their— both
4 read the equity priorities and receive training and
5 be in conversation in the language that is most
6 comfortable for them and then translated into English
7 for the purposes of our data analysis.

8 So we have in the second cycle went out and asked
9 New Yorkers, these are the 18 priorities that you
10 have identified, which ones are the most urgent for
11 you? And what they told us was that the cost of
12 living is the most urgent, which aligns with the
13 affordability conversation in New New York. I do want
14 to be clear that when our New Yorkers are talking to
15 CORE about the cost of living, they are also
16 specifically noting that they don't see or hear
17 themselves in the affordability agenda, particularly
18 Black New Yorkers.

19 Our respondent pool is I believe this second
20 cycle is around 37 percent Black, 22 percent Latino,
21 and then we've got a mixture. We do use data
disaggregation, and so we allow for people to be very
specific about how they want to identify.

The other two community equity priorities—

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Can I ask you to dial in on
3 that? In terms of they've identified the cost of
4 living is most urgent, and yet your participants
5 don't see them reflected in the affordability agenda.
6 How are you harnessing that information? Like, what
7 are the— like, how are they saying that to you? In
8 response to—

9 LINDA TIGANI: We have open-ended responses in our
10 survey, so people are able to write down any
11 additional thoughts. And then these are community
12 conversations, so there are 20 to 25 people sitting
13 in a room, all neighbors, who are just having a
14 robust conversation. And so there's extensive
15 note-taking that happens, and we work closely with
16 the organizations to hear what folks are saying.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Got it.

18 LINDA TIGANI: I do wanna note housing was the
19 second most urgent, and then the third most urgent
20 was holding police and ACS accountable for the harms
21 that they commit in our communities.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Hmm, mmm. Okay, so I— this is
really great information. Just before I open up,
'cause there are a couple other questions I'll come
back to you, are there any lessons that you're taking

2 away from the, this, the, the, the second cycle that
3 you, you want to account into moving forward?

4 LINDA TIGANI: There are a few lessons, both in,
5 like, how we're working with community and what that
6 looks like and how we can improve. I'm gonna leave
7 those operational pieces a little separate from the
8 policy piece. What we hear often is, what is CORE's
9 accountability mechanism? Are we actually gonna hold
10 the city accountable? And we are, as a Racial Equity
11 Commission, the only Racial Equity Commission in the
12 nation with an accountability mechanism. And our role
13 is specifically to push the Mayor, the executive
14 branch, and city agencies to comply with the Charter.
15 Which is not- it's, it's- the Charter is not a
16 buffet. It's not subject to you choose which law you
17 wanna follow or which deadline you wanna follow.
18 These deadlines are statutory, and so they must be
19 complied with.

20 And so what I feel like happens whenever we go
21 out into community is they ask us, well, how is the
Administration actually moving forward and hearing
our voice if we are the accountability body, what
does that look like in day-to-day government work?

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Hmm, mmm. Yeah, I mean, we,
3 we struggle as well as an oversight body in terms of
4 at least over the last 4 years of, of which laws
5 administra- an administra- this, well, the previous
6 Administration chose to comply with and which ones
7 they just decided that they didn't have to deal with
8 unless we sue them which is an extreme, drain on
9 resources. So I think we share that challenge as
10 well.

11 I'm going to open it up to my colleagues for
12 questions. I, I saw Council Member Hanif had a
13 question, and if anyone else has, please flag for me.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, so, well, one, thank
15 you for being here and, and just illuminating more on
16 what is just a big failure.

17 So if the plan's not finalized, are agencies
18 required to follow any- any alternative equity plan
19 or-

20 LINDA TIGANI: To my understanding, there is no
21 alternative equity plan outlined in the Charter that
they would be forced to follow. And so if the plan is
not finalized, they- can continue to hold the work
and not be forced to enact equity in their work at
all.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then for when the plan
3 goes into effect what would happen if an agency
4 doesn't comply?

5 LINDA TIGANI: That's a great question. So if an
6 agency doesn't comply, our work is to monitor the
7 implementation of the work and really to raise
8 community voices and to bring people to do the push
9 and the accountability work that they need to do.
10 It's not just CORE that would be coming to— whether
11 it is protesting in the streets, whether it is coming
12 back to City Council, whether it is meeting with the
13 Administration, meeting with the city agency. I think
14 there are a lot of different accountability
15 mechanisms that can happen. But I do wanna be clear,
16 it's not only CORE that would be doing that work. It
17 would also be the voice of the people.

18 Again, we have over 10,000 New Yorkers that
19 participated in this work, and each of them re—
20 receive services from various city agencies. And so
21 they are also looking to show up and be there to push
the city agencies to do their work.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Absolutely. So without a
finalized Racial Equity plan, how is OMB evaluating
budget proposals to reduce disparities?

2 LINDA TIGANI: I don't know if OMB is doing that
3 work.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I just wanted that on the
5 record. And then finally the, the piece about
6 community accountability, because the community has
7 participated in several engagement cycles. What are
8 we saying? What are we telling residents who, who
9 know either that the report hasn't come out or that
10 there's no plan or that without the plan, there's no
11 alternative that is baseline that agencies are
12 following? And the disparities, of course, are
13 continuing because they are reporting through 311 or
14 to their elected official, what have you.

15 TYRIK WASHINGTON: Greatly appreciate that
16 question, and this is where we have to be very honest
17 in this particular moment. I'm grateful for the
18 leadership that our Chairperson has provided, because
19 again, to reinforce this, this was something that
20 CORE came out of a painful reality in a particular
21 time, specifically out of the killing of murder of
George Floyd, right? And so it's in that context that
the community, particularly Black New Yorkers
specifically, wanted this level of duality to happen,

1
2 this inside-outside strategy with CORE being an
3 independent agency holding accountability.

4 And so our push here at this hearing is also to
5 recognize the— one, the Administration is new, right?
6 And so you want to have this level of grace and not
7 to be adversarial at all, but also understand that
8 there were so many that laid that kind of foundation.
9 So it's— it has been the community that has been
10 ultimately saying, where's the plan?

11 And so where are we going from now, especially
12 with the other mandates that we have around
13 reparations and several other oversights that we have
14 to provide? There has been several levels of
15 community, what we're calling borough-wide outreach
16 campaigns to kind of increase this level of
17 individual voice participation in government.

18 And so the plan itself, it's deeply important to
19 in— increasing more civic engagement, right? And so
20 it's deeply linked to that. And so for the outreach
21 perspective, our work continues to go, but the
challenge is the partnership that we are looking for
on the other side as well, the proximity of
conversation.

2 It's not so much, just even the plan. I think it
3 was a powerful question before. How are— how is this
4 Administration looking to partner with an independent
5 agency totally mandated to the actual people itself?
6 And I think that is a unique thing.

7 One, it's unique from this perspective. That
8 there is no other model for this across the nation.
9 So New York City has the ability to set the
10 framework, to lay the blueprint of what does people
11 power look like at this particular moment. And so for
12 us, we will continue to do this borough-wide whether
13 it's the Bronx, Brooklyn, where I'm from, the
14 greatest borough that ever lived, and various other—

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I just wanted it on the
16 record, I agree.

17 TYRIK WASHINGTON: I agree, absolutely.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I second that motion.

19 TYRIK WASHINGTON: But whether—

20 RACHEL NADELSON: Third.

21 TYRIK WASHINGTON: But whether it's that, but it's
also the understanding, how do we encourage people?
And so I think Linda has been— I mean, I'm sorry,
Chairperson Tijani has been able to be exceptional to
maintain that connectivity, to still push for the

1
2 plan, but larger than the plan, how do we empower
3 people's voices at this particular time?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. Next up we have
6 Council Member Stevens.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good afternoon. Thank you
8 for being here. And Chairperson, I know you have a
9 long day because we have a hearing after this on some
10 of the, the very things we're talking about here,
11 which was one of the mandates around ECS.

12 So thank you for being here with me today. I'm
13 gonna be here all day. But I guess for me I wanted to
14 also just jump into a little bit around, like, the
15 Commissioners and one just ask, are all the
16 Commissioners filled on the commission? And wanna
17 make sure if they're not, which roles need to be
18 filled.

19 LINDA TIGANI: Excuse me. So we have 13
20 Commissioners. We have one spot that is open, and
21 that is Staten Island representative, which is a
speaker appointee seat. That role just became open.
Our commissioner, Yesenia Mata, was brought into the
Administration to lead the Department of Veterans

1
2 Services. The speaker has 90 days to identify a
3 replacement.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And could you talk a
5 little bit about the Commissioner's role in CORE and
6 how that really plays into the overall work that
7 you're doing? Because I think sometimes folks are not
8 understanding that, like, you have to— the
9 Commissioners are the one, like, kind of pushing even
10 this racial equity conversation.

11 LINDA TIGANI: Yes, thank you. So, we —so I'm
12 responsible for 14 commissioners, 15 staff members,
13 70 organizations, and the 10,000 New Yorkers that
14 came out.

15 My work is to ensure that strategy that is
16 developed by our colleagues at the commission are
17 raised to commissioners. They, they get briefed on
18 all of our major campaigns and areas of work. They
19 participate by informing the strategy, raising
20 questions, refining plans, and then voting on
21 essential matters.

22 So one example is when we created— not created,
23 sorry, when we finalized the 18 community equity
24 priorities, we held open meetings which are recorded

2 and uploaded on our YouTube where the commissioners
3 voted on the final language.

4 They workshopped it with community members after
5 a full cycle and then they voted on it. And so there
6 are specific matters in which they vote on a
7 particular decision, and all other matters they
8 inform strategy.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And so I just- I, I want
10 to also just point out, like, you said you have 15
11 staff, right? 15 staff, and then you have the
12 commissioners, and that's a lot. And I want to just-
13 kudos, because that's a lot of work to do with very
14 little staff to be able to do civic engagement for
15 the entirety of New York City.

16 LINDA TIGANI: Thank you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So that's a lot, and
18 that's a huge mandate and I don't think that should
19 kind of just be glossed over. In addition to this
20 Racial Equity Plan, you have other mandates that
21 you're working on that I know at the Council we keep
passing. So definitely want to be able to support in
that work. But just to wrap it up on the
commissioners, and so even with around the Racial
Equity Plan, can you talk a little bit about what the

1
2 commissioners have really been pushing for and looked
3 to your leadership to do, even around, like, the the
4 lawsuit that was put in place even in with the last
Administration?

5 LINDA TIGANI: So the Commissioners did vote on
6 the lawsuit. We had several deliberations. We all, as
7 a, as a set of Commissioners, met with the attorneys
8 prior to moving forward with them. They informed
9 every step of the strategy, was, which was also
10 obstructed by the Adams Administration. They
11 attempted to prevent us from using our own money to
12 hire a lawyer, and we thankfully were able to receive
13 pro bono services, but that was after Corporation
14 Counsel refused to sign a certification that just
15 acknowledged we have a difference of opinion on the
16 Charter. And because she would not— the former
17 Corporation Counsel would not sign that
18 certification, OMB would not release the funds to
19 allow us to use our money, but also the Comptroller's
20 Office would never have registered a contract.

21 So the Commissioners were a part of the
deliberation. They have moved forward. I do wanna be
clear that all of the Commissioners, including
Yesenia Mata, who is the one Commissioner that is now

1 leading DVS. She was the bridge between the Racial
2 Justice Commission and CORE because she served on
3 both. The Commissioners want to do their work. They
4 say at every single meeting, in between meetings,
5 where is the plan?

6 Their main purpose is to review the plan and
7 provide comments with community members. For close to
8 3 years, they have not been able to do that job.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, I just- I think
10 that's just important to note, right? Like, that is
11 the main function, and they have been prevented from
12 doing that. And so we want to make sure that we're
13 continuing supporting you and the Commissioners to
14 get this done, because we do understand the
15 importance. And just understanding that this isn't
16 just something that's in the box that we wanted to
17 check after, you know, Black Lives Matter movement.
18 This is something that we want to make sure that is
19 being upheld because it's necessary.

20 I mean, and, you know, they say it all the time
21 when America has a cold, Black people have the flu.
And America right now, they got pneumonia, so what
does that mean for Black people?

LINDA TIGANI: Yeah.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And so we have to make
3 sure that those things are being uplifted. So thank
4 you for the work that you're doing.

5 LINDA TIGANI: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Council Member
7 Stevens. I just have two final questions. One, has
8 CORE been given any opportunity to consult or give
9 feedback on the development of the cost of living
10 measure?

11 LINDA TIGANI: No, we have not.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Have you ever in the past?

13 LINDA TIGANI: No, we have not. That plan, that
14 plan and process has not been shared with us.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And is that an
16 expectation that it would be shared with you all?

17 LINDA TIGANI: CORE has oversight over all of the
18 work in Chapter 78, including the task force on
19 racial equity, data disaggregation guidelines. Data
20 disaggregation guidelines should also be in the
21 Racial Equity Plan but we have not had insight into
anything outside of the plan, and even that was
minimal at the beginning when we briefed city
agencies on the draft Racial Equity priority.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, my understanding is that
3 they're planning, planning for a March release, and
4 so that's concerning if you all have not had any
input on that.

5 LINDA TIGANI: So the March 31st is the also the
6 Charter deadline for the true cost of living measure.
7 This should be the second true cost of living measure
8 report that should be released. After hearing the
9 testimony from our partners at MOERJ, I, I do wanna
10 just sort of note it is a bit telling that the true
11 cost of living measure will be released on time, but
12 the Racial Equity planning process deadlines were
13 were put aside.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And that's something that if
15 things were going the right way, you would be able to
16 look at, review, provide some input on before it gets
17 published.

18 LINDA TIGANI: Yes. And that's something that we
19 would absolutely welcome.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Wow. Okay. In the past, you
21 all have flagged inconsistencies in citywide data
collection as a limitation on its ability to
accurately measure and track outcome indicators,
particularly with respect to demographic breakdowns.

1
2 To what extent have you been able to engage with
3 MOERJ in relation to these data insufficiencies?

4 LINDA TIGANI: After our second cycle of
5 engagement, we did share with MOERJ what our data
6 disaggregation groupings were going to look like—
7 excuse me— for the second cycle. We shared how we
8 broke down different categories and particularly what
9 people were referring to when they checked off race,
10 ethnicity.

11 We also add an open question for ancestry, which
12 is a law in New York State. Actually, all city
13 agencies should be offering that particular question.
14 And so we created new categories to reflect what we
15 saw was the response in the first cycle to the second
16 cycle.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. If, and if there's any
18 specific data points that you think are missing I
19 mean, we asked it of the, of the Admin. They said
20 they have enough with what's publicly available. If
21 there's anything else besides what you just
mentioned, is there— is— do you want to put that on
the record?

LINDA TIGANI: The main concern around publicly
available data is that it's few and far between, and

1 that the public avail— publicly available data also
2 has extensive lag, and so you're not looking at the
3 most recent changes. And as we all know, our city has
4 seen great changes in a short period of time from
5 COVID till now. Excuse me.

6 There are also key data sets that are not
7 released in a timely fashion, and the data sets that
8 are released do not have expanded data disaggregation
9 categories.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Is there anything else you'd
11 like to mention today?

12 LINDA TIGANI: I'd actually like to open that up
13 to to our colleagues— to my colleagues.

14 RACHEL NADELSON: Mhm. Thank you. I mean, I think
15 one, one issue that bears mentioning is that there's
16 a transparency element to all of this. So I can
17 appreciate the fact that agencies took account of
18 their existing budgets when they were developing
19 their plans, but, you know, in the coming months,
20 they're going to be, you know, testifying before the
21 Council on, you know, how they spend their current
budget, how they anticipate spending their
forthcoming budget. And because the plan— the Racial
Equity Plan hasn't been released, those conversations

1
2 can't be informed by the substance of the Racial
3 Equity Plan.

4 So this- I think the same applies to just sort of
5 ongoing collaboration with- between CORE and MOERJ,
6 where obviously that is something that is meant to
7 happen and, you know, like, we are indeed meant to
8 sort of provide guidance in different ways to one
9 another.

10 But, I mean, this isn't supposed to be just a
11 conversation about a draft plan that exists between
12 two agencies. This is supposed to be something made
13 available to the public. And that's a- that's a
14 concern of ours.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And what seems confusing to me
16 as someone who's walking into this Committee and
17 getting more familiar is if the testimony today
18 earlier was there's a racial equity team, planning
19 team within each age- at least over 40 agencies, and
20 there have been, it would- I would assume something's
21 written down somewhere, right? And whether it's
aggregated into or consolidated into an overall
citywide plan or not, that, that has actionable items
in it that can be addressed and can be put on the
record at any given time.

1 Like, there's nothing stopping an agency
2 necessarily from moving forward besides this release
3 of this plan, but they could do it if they chose and
4 made the case internally and, and to OMB to move
5 things forward, right? Is that— I mean, if DOT says,
6 you know what, we wanna prioritize equity, and we're
7 gonna fight with OMB about it and make sure it's
8 included in our Preliminary Budget, they could do
9 that.

9 LINDA TIGANI: Yes, they absolutely could do that.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Have something on paper
11 already, right?

12 LINDA TIGANI: They could do that as just as an
13 agency that also is complying with the preamble of
14 the Charter. What is missing, though, if they choose
15 to do that, is the people's voice in what they are
16 choosing to invest in, what are the programs,
17 practices, policies, as well as the target areas.
18 What neighborhoods are we starting with?

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right, okay, I understand
20 that, the, the community feedback on it. Great.
21 Anything else to add before— okay, thank you all.
We look forward to continuing to work together and,
and creating accountability on this.

2 Our next and final panel before public testimony,
3 we will invite Logan Clark Assistant Director for
4 Budget Review on behalf of the New York City
5 Independent Budget Office. And when you're ready,
6 Committee Counsel will swear you in.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Now officially
8 3 minutes in. Thank you for joining us today. Could
9 you please raise your right hand? And do you swear to
10 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
11 truth before this Committee?

12 LOGAN CLARK: I do.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Please begin when
14 you're ready.

15 LOGAN CLARK: Good afternoon Chair Nurse and
16 esteemed members of Council. I am Logan Clark, the
17 Assistant Director of Budget Review at the New York
18 City Independent Budget Office. IBO is a nonpartisan
19 independent government agency mandated by the New
20 York City Charter.

21 IBO's mission is to enhance public understanding
of the New York City budget, public policy, and
economy through independent analysis. IBO thanks you
for the opportunity to testify today on this
important topic, budgeting for equity.

2 As the Illinois-based Civic Federation states, a
3 fundamental principle of equity-based budgeting is
4 the use of data broken down by historically
5 underrepresented economic and demographic
6 characteristics to identify disparities and bias in
7 tax systems and inform resource allocation.

8 By collecting and analyzing data disaggregated by
9 these factors, policymakers can pinpoint where
10 inequities are most pronounced and direct funding to
11 the areas of greatest need.

12 IBO's data focus allows an understanding of the
13 opportunities and limitations to New York City's
14 budget. IBO consistently focuses on issues of equity,
15 and following this testimony is a list of IBO reports
16 and other resources that address this dimension of a
17 broad range of topics.

18 New York City's budget comprises several
19 components: the operating or expense budget, the
20 capital budget, and the revenue budget. And questions
21 of equity are different depending on which component
is being discussed. In the Expense Budget, IBO
typically asks who could be and who is actually being
served by a program. On the Capital Budget, the

1
2 question becomes where and what and how is the city
3 building?

4 And regarding the Revenue Budget the questions
5 are who is controlling New York City— or who is
6 sorry, apologies who is NYC collecting revenues from?
7 And is this collection proportional? What revenues
8 are not being collected and what drives that?

9 Let's address some of the central data challenges
10 to tracking and measuring equity. First, demographic
11 data. While understanding policy design and outcomes
12 on the basis of race, ethnicity, income, gender
13 identity and sexual orientation, and disability while
14 that is central to equity, generally administrative
15 datasets or systems of record do not typically track
16 these factors.

17 That leads us to geographic data. New Yorkers
18 should be able to rely on the Charter Section 100g,
19 which states for each city agency that has local or
20 borough service districts within community districts
21 and boroughs, the departmental estimates and
executive budget, where practicable, shall contain a
statement of proposed direct expenditures in each
such service district for each requested unit of
appropriation.

2 Yet the city's existing report attempting to meet
3 this requirement is extremely limited. The city's
4 budget publications include the geographic report for
5 the Expense Budget, a publication that only covers 14
6 city agencies.

7 Those -that subset of agencies comprises roughly
8 \$10 billion in appropriations for Fiscal Year 2027.
9 Of which only \$1.8 billion is reported
10 geographically. That's about 1.4 percent of our \$127
11 billion Proposed Budget.

12 The Department of Education is a notable
13 exclusion from this report, as are the Human
14 Resources Administration and the Department of
15 Homeless Services. This straightens the chart- the
16 Charter's requirement that the budget be reported
17 geographically geographically where practicable,
18 beyond credulity.

19 This leads us to budget data and budget
20 structures. The lack of consistent detail in how
21 budgets are categorized further adds to the inability
to understand equity. IBO has previously testified to
City Council and to Charter Revision Commissions that
creating unit of- er, creating units of appropriation
standards across agencies could greatly improve

1 insight into how -into New York City's budget
2 choices.

3 The current structures of, er, the current
4 structure of units of appropriation in many agencies
5 does not conform to the original intent of the
6 Charter to provide programmatic transparency within
7 the budget. Despite these challenges, assessing
8 equity within the budget is not impossible. Far from
9 it. IBO routinely uses geographic proxy data to
rigorously evaluate city spending.

10 Most often that involves the use of data from the
11 United States Census Bureau, and IBO appreciates
12 Council's leadership role in maintaining the quality
13 of census data in its collection and usage. As
14 Council proceeds IBO suggests enhancing standards
15 around units of appropriation and enhancing Charter
16 Section 100G to encompass a broader scope within the
17 city's budget. And we thank you for the invitation to
testify today, and we welcome the opportunity to
continue this critical conversation.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Well, thank you for being
19 here. I really appreciate it. I have just two, two
20 questions for you, but er, maybe a few, but I wanted
21 to give Council Member Lynn Schulman an opportunity

1
2 to ask some questions first. You sure? Okay. I've
3 been talking a lot, so— all right.

4 In your testimony, you mentioned the need for
5 disaggregated data. CORE also has been calling for
6 this. Have IBO and CORE discussed or otherwise
7 collaborated in any way on this topic?

8 LOGAN CLARK: Our leaderships have met together
9 and we are continuing that conversation.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And you've all met this year?

11 LOGAN CLARK: Yes, within the past, I believe, 6
12 months.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay and in your testimony,
14 you mentioned needing standards across agencies for
15 units of appropriation. Can you elaborate on any
16 specific recommendations you may have for structuring
17 U of A's that would support improved transparency and
18 evaluation on the budget, including for
19 equity-related commitments?

20 LOGAN CLARK: Absolutely. I believe the, the thing
21 that we don't want to do is dictate how agencies run
their operations. And so the, the standards should be
something that applies broadly but is still something
that can allow for greater geographic detail. In, in
budget structures that are below the unit of

1
2 appropriation these are called budget codes. Certain
3 agencies are - will have programs that cover 5
4 boroughs all within a single budget code. Others are,
5 are doing this on a borough level. Others have
6 multiple pro- programs within a particular budget
7 code. So it becomes difficult to disaggregate a lot
8 of data without really hands-on knowledge there.

9 This is honestly a challenge that we have in, in
10 a question that we get from the public routinely is
11 what are the dollars that are actually being spent in
12 my district? And in enforcing some greater standards
13 on units of appropriation, we believe that there,
14 there's some level that could be created there.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Agree. And have you spoken
16 with OMB or any other agencies about implementing any
17 of these recommendations? Are you aware of any
18 initiatives to look at spending more rigorously from
19 an equity perspective? For example, in the way that
20 CORE was describing concerning new needs requests or
21 underspending requests?

LOGAN CLARK: Absolutely. I, I, we are in, in
continual dialogue with our, our partners over at OMB
and across city government. The, the main thing I, I
think when we look at what agencies are requesting is

1
2 that many of those requests aren't public to begin
3 with. You know, we're discussing what eval- er, what
4 criteria is OMB evaluating new needs requests on. New
5 needs are, are generally not something that are, are
6 made public in terms of their overall submissions. So
7 that's something that could be looked at. I, I think
8 that's something that is, is a potential area of
9 discussion. But yeah, broadly speaking, you know, we
10 are continuing conversations with with other parts of
11 city government.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And do you have any other
13 transparency-related recommended- recommendations
14 across city government?

15 LOGAN CLARK: Broadly speaking, I think there is
16 plenty of data that could be better and could be put
17 out in more machine-readable formats. I know we were
18 discussing our dislike of PDFs earlier.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I hate them.

20 LOGAN CLARK: Yes, so there's a great number of
21 things that I, I think particularly surrounding the
budget that are, are difficult to disaggregate. And
that's part of why our office was created back in
1989 as Charter Revision Commission. And so I, I, I
do believe that there are things that we should be

1
2 doing to demystify the budget and, and we'd be happy
3 to follow up with more specific recommendations.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I, I believe the council- and
5 I might be wrong- I know at least for the Department
6 of Correction, we required them to start doing
7 machine-readable format reports and they were not
8 compliant for 2 years. So we had to badger them every
9 month to stop sending us PDFs of very large files
10 that we just can't read.

11 So I'm gonna turn it over to Council Member
12 Schulman.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you and thank you
14 for being here today. So a couple things. One is, is
15 DOHMH one of those 14 agencies?

16 LOGAN CLARK: Sorry, checking my footnotes here.
17 DOHMH is one of those agencies.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, so, you know we
19 face budget deficits every year, and so- but there's
20 money, I think, that's being duplicative in a number
21 of different places because we don't disaggregate it,
so we don't know that. Would you agree with that?

LOGAN CLARK: I would have to get back- but in
general, as a general-

LOGAN CLARK: There-

1 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: It could be-

2 LOGAN CLARK: There are certainly inefficiencies
3 across city government in terms of-

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I would - So a few
5 things. One is since we are starting budget season,
6 I would ask that you let us know, like, a list of
7 what Council Member Chair Nurse said in terms of what
8 the units of appropriation- because every year when
9 we bargain with the Administration, we don't get that
many. We get like a handful.

10 So we gotta figure out what that is. Particularly
11 I'm interested- I'm Chair of the Health Committee.
12 so, DOHMH and H&H, and then H&H has the challenge of,
13 like, it's a quasi-city agency, and so there are
14 things being spent on that side and duplicates. I
15 know there's duplicative effort in terms of a lot of
16 different services that- but they're very- but the
city OMB buries the money in H&H because they don't
have to, ah, account for it.

17 So if you can- give us some idea, and the other
18 is that when OMB testifies at the Preliminary Budget
19 hearings, I would ask that you come and testify, or
20 somebody from IBO come and testify.
21

2 LOGAN CLARK: Oh, absolutely. We'd be- we'd be
3 more than happy to carry on that conversation and
4 follow up with specifics and we will be there on the
5 11th, I believe is when we're- we're set to testify.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah, I think that's the
7 date, but these are- these- it's so important in
8 disaggregating information, whether it's DOHMH or
9 something else, or, or mental health and, and all of
10 these different things. I mean, if we know where the
11 money is going, then we know where to put- where
12 there's- where we need resources, where maybe we can
13 take from other, you know. And we're not doing that.
14 The city has never really done that.

15 So if we can push on that- we have a new
16 Administration- and maybe that's something we can
17 look for and, you know, move forward toward, that
18 would be great. So, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I just have one more question.
20 In your testimony, you talked about- you're looking
21 at and evaluating expense capital and programming
around who is or could be being served by a program.
How do you go about getting those questions answered
from across the different agencies?

1
2 LOGAN CLARK: Absolutely, so IBO has a-a, charter
3 mandate to receive this, ah, information. That's been
4 backed up by the courts, ah, back in the Giuliani
5 Administration, ah, when there were difficulties in
6 us obtaining information from, ah, city agencies. Uhm
7 and we frequently do request information from, ah,
8 other operating, ah, city agencies. Ah, but it's also
9 something where we do use geographic proxies often.
10 And so, for information that's publicly available. A,
11 an example of this earlier this year was our work on
12 cooling centers that are run through NYSEM. And
13 that's something that's publicly available data, and
14 we're able to overlay that on other publicly
15 available data on such as census tracts to figure out
16 the, the racial and equitable impacts around those.
17 And so this is something that we're very familiar
18 with in terms of, of trying to- in absence of
19 administrative data that specifically says who is
20 being served, we're, we're pretty good at being able
21 to figure out a proxy that will get us to something
for certain programs.

19 It's more difficult on, on other things,
20 honestly. And, and cooling centers is honestly one of
21 the things that I think sort of highlights the

1
2 difficulties particularly in just measuring demand
3 for city services when you're not taking headcount at
4 the door for something, right? And you get something
5 similar with libraries as well. And, and who's coming
6 into a cooling center to be cooled versus, you know,
7 if a cooling center is a, a pet, ah, Petco, you know,
8 are they just going to get something for their pet?

9 So those types of questions— and again, this is
10 just one example of those but those types of
11 questions are, are things that we are intimately
12 familiar with over at IBO.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Well, you— so it sounds like
14 you don't have to chase the agency down for that
15 data.

16 LOGAN CLARK: Oh, it depends on the agency— the
17 agency.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay are there any bad
19 actors?

20 LOGAN CLARK: We could follow up with specifics.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Uh you could put it on the
record too, don't worry, you're an independent
office.

LOGAN CLARK: This is very true. Uh I think we can
go ahead and follow up with some of the difficulties

2 that we have. And honestly again, some of this is-
3 [PAUSE] is data security as well, in terms of times
4 when we were dealing with personally identifying
5 information.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Well, we don't ask for that. I
7 mean, I think it's these broad questions if there are
8 people who can afford or have very little cash or
9 high cash incomes and they can't afford their AC, we
10 should have more cooling centers there, right? Like,
11 that has nothing to do with personal information.

12 So what I'm saying is, if there are people that
13 you have to- agencies that you have to chase down
14 more on broad strokes data, it would be helpful to
15 know that.

16 LOGAN CLARK: Absolutely and we could follow up
17 with that.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. My last question has
19 there been discussion about whether COREs community
20 engagement mandate could be complementary to or help
21 support IBO's understanding of and research on how
the public is being served by different budget
decisions?

LOGAN CLARK: I, I would have to again follow up
with specifics on that, but I, I think that there is

1 a, a strong alignment between IBO and the work that
2 CORE does. IBO serves absolutely every single New
3 Yorker that calls this city home and CORE is doing
4 much the same. And so I think there is a, a strong
5 alignment between our, our two offices on that front.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Okay, we really
7 appreciate you coming to testify, and we hope to
8 continue chatting with you.

9 LOGAN CLARK: Absolutely. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Awesome. So one second.

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

17 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
18 to testify. No video recording or photography is
19 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
20 the public may not present audio or video recordings
21 as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such
recordings to the Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion of
in, in the hearing record.

2 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
3 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-at-Arms
4 and wait to be recognized.

5 When recognized, you will have 3 minutes to speak
6 on today's hearing topic. If you have a written
7 statement or additional written testimony you wish to
8 submit for the record, please provide a copy of that
9 testimony to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email
10 written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within
11 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings
12 will not be accepted.

13 I'd like to bring to the witness table Madeline
14 Neighly from Federation of Protestant Welfare
15 Agencies, Roger L. Green, Coalition for a Democratic
16 and Just New York, and Rebekah Cook Mack from Legal
17 Aid Society.

18 Anyone can start.

19 MADELINE NEIGHLY: Thank you so much. Good
20 afternoon. Thank you to the members of the City
21 Council Committee on Civil and Human Rights and to
Chair Nurse for convening this oversight hearing on
budgeting for equity. My name is Madeline Neighly.
I'm the Chief of Policy and Research at FPWA.

2 In 2022, we commissioned the Urban Institute to
3 develop a True Cost of Economic Security, or TCES,
4 measure following the 2022 ballot measure mandating
5 the city's true cost of living measure. To meet the
6 mandate, the city has worked with the same team that
7 developed the national True Cost of Economic Security
8 to develop New York City's True Cost of living
9 measure.

10 While this measure has not yet been released, the
11 national TCES measure provides county-level granular
12 insight into all 5 boroughs. What we found is a
13 higher than national rate of economic insecurity in
14 our city and an inequitable distribution of economic
15 insecurity across our city. Economic insecurity is
16 concentrated in communities of color. While 43
17 percent of white New Yorkers are economically
18 insecure, 63 percent of AAPI New Yorkers, 68 percent
19 of Black New Yorkers, and 78 percent of Latin New
20 Yorkers are economically insecure.

21 Economic insecurity falls hardest on families
with children. Nearly 3 out of 4 New York families
with children, or 72 percent, are economically
insecure. And for single-parent households, the vast
majority of whom are headed by single mothers, the

2 economic insecurity rate in our city is 91 percent.
3 The True Cost of Living Measure not only gives us
4 statistics, it makes visible the precarity of New
5 Yorkers, where it is concentrated, what costs drive
6 it, and where resources are lacking.

7 This visibility is necessary for equitable
8 budgeting and policymaking. As such, we look forward
9 to working with the Council and the Mayor's office to
10 ensure release and, more importantly, utilization of
11 New York City's True Cost of Living Measure to build
12 a New York in which everyone has economic security.

13 Thank you, and I welcome any questions.

14 ROGER GREEN: Roger Green one of the founders of
15 the Coalition for a Democratic and Just New York,
16 also a former member of the New York State Assembly.
17 I served in the Assembly for over 26 years and during
18 my tenure, I was the ah, Chair of the New York State
19 Black, Puerto Rican, Asian Caucus for, ah, at least 3
20 terms, longest-serving Chair of that body. And also
21 had the privilege of serving as the Chair of the
Standing Committee on Children and Families and the
Joint Budget Conference Committee on Health and Human
Services.

1
2 And so I w-wanted to- um talk about this through
3 my own lived experience as a member of the state
4 legislature, in which I had er, to learn that mo-
5 much of public policy is in fact informed by the
6 social construction of both class, race, and gender
7 and this was my own personal experience. And Given
8 that reality I went- the city and the people of New
9 York er, hmm, determined to change the Charter in
10 2022.

11 I thought that this was a major paradigm shift,
12 a, a positive move in the direction of creating a
13 more equitable and just society, particularly in New
14 York City. And so I am wanted to come here as a
15 member of our coalition, which was founded first as
16 the Coalition for Democratic- I mean, Coalition for a
17 Just New York, which was the organization that I
18 co-founded with Al Bann and others to to mobilize for
19 the election of David Dinkins to suggest that that it
20 is important at this point in time to ensure that the
21 what has been placed in law should be enforced.

18 I was severely disappointed at the previous
19 Administration who failed to enact what was what was
20 the law and I see this as essentially a violation of
21 the core principles of a democracy, which is

1 self-governance and also the consent of the governed
2 and we can't get around that. If in fact we're
3 calling ourselves a true democratic republic even in
4 the sovereignty of New York City there has to be a
5 commitment to ensure that we embrace that and we
6 enforce those principles. And I think particularly
7 also, I— and I was a supporter of the Mayor,
8 enthusiastically supported the Mayor.

9 I still think that it's important for this
10 Administration to understand that as well and to
11 internalize that particularly in its Administration
12 of its governance. And I wanted to say this
13 particularly in the context of for instance, one of
14 his key priorities, which is childcare.

15 I served as, as I said, as the Chairperson of the
16 Committee on Children and Families. I had the
17 privilege of authoring legislation to expand
18 childcare through the CUNY system. The enactment of
19 the facilitated childcare provision in law that
20 expanded childcare for working-class families, that
21 was my legislation.

But I also know that again, if it's not
administered correctly communities of color will be
marginalized and I can say that from a personal

1
2 experience. Over the past few months I have a
3 grandson, and my wife and I have been working with my
4 daughter to identify childcare for my grandson,
5 little Asiyah. And I can tell you that this is just
6 from a cursory experience that I have found that the
7 distribution of childcare services are different in
8 some communities than in others. Where communities of
9 color er, people of color exist, live - the quality
10 of childcare that we found through my own personal
11 assessment- and I am a former educator- was subpar in
12 comparison to where we found those childcare services
13 in other parts of the, of the city.

14 And so this is where I think this whole concept
15 of the true cost of living measure becomes important
16 also and I want to cite what I think may be something
17 that Chairman Nurse, that that you should consider.
18 Which is looking at at the very least, a proof of
19 concept around these the principles of of, of, of
20 equity, ensuring that there's equity starting with,
21 for instance, the childcare proposals that the Mayor
has begun to unfold.

And in that one can look at the concept again,
the true cost of living measure, particularly as it
relates to the workers in the childcare system who

1
2 are underpaid, which I think is again, again, a
3 reflection of the public policies, the social
4 construction of gender, as well as race. Most of
5 those workers are women, most of those workers are
6 women of color, and also compound discrimination,
7 many of them also are, ah, new immigrants in the city
8 of New York.

9 And so that's an example of why I think it was
10 unfortunate that the Mayor didn't include this whole
11 concept within his Preliminary Budget.

12 The other thing I think is, again support for
13 diverse providers to ensure that this concept of
14 equity looks at how the city is going to ensure that
15 diverse providers er, based upon gender, race, and
16 class are given opportunities to provide childcare
17 services in the city. And then, of course I think the
18 whole issue of the, ah, cultural competency becomes
19 important, ensuring that that also is a part of the
20 Administration of the childcare services. And then
21 finally, streamlining access to care— to barriers,
which I think started with the legislation that I had
enacted which was the, ah, facilitated enrollment,
ah, program.

1
2 So I wanted to just come here to say that. And
3 finally, again, to emphasize that that the concept of
4 the consent of the governed and the concept and the
5 principle of democratic self-governance cannot be
6 compromised. That if in fact the people of New York
7 went to the polls in 2022 and enacted this into law,
8 that it's that it is required that those that are in
9 power from the Mayor on down uh respect that.

10 I would close on this other note also, that the
11 concept of community priorities is very important.
12 When we met with the Mayor prior to the election, one
13 of the things that we talked to him about was the
14 importance of breaking up the command - bureaucracy
15 that really is a reflection of what I call social
16 welfare colonialism. You know, that we have a system
17 in which the people aren't given an opportunity to
18 engage in, ah, a process of community empowerment and
19 associate democracy to define the type of programs
20 that they need within their respective neighborhoods.
21 And I think that's why the commission's work is so
important.

And I just close on saying that I hope that you
will give, ah, your strong voice in support of that
and encourage the mayor to amend his Preliminary

1 Budget and include the core principles that have been
2 articulated by the Commission on Racial Equity.

3 Again, thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: No, thank you and, and just to
5 respond we agree, we agree and I think the majority
6 of the, the Council agrees. The Black Council Members
7 wrote a letter directly a little bit ago saying this
8 is a priority and we expect it and today the
9 Progressive Caucus also put a statement out saying
10 we, we need this plan. And I've- I think many people
11 have said it directly to the Mayor and I actually,
12 ah, I actually think he could have just released it
13 and said, hey, this is what the previous
14 Administration thought of the racial equity plan.

15 This is not what we want, and we need your help
16 everybody to get it into place and I think it would
17 have gone a long way to just say- to, to- it would
18 have gone a long way towards transparency, right?

19 ROGER GREEN: Right.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Like, and to- and, and my
21 philosophy is like, bring people into sharing the
22 problem. The problem was we had a bad Administration
23 that did not prioritize this and whatever, redlined
24 this plan to hell.

1
2 So you can let people know that. and it actually,
3 I think, would, would compel people to be- work with
4 you to fix it and I think when you don't share what
5 the challenges are with the public and people and
6 trust them that they're- we're not stupid, we know
7 that they will, they will show up and, and, and help
8 try to solve the problem.

9 And so I, I do think that was a misstep, and I
10 think that was- that it has been communicated across
11 the board. So we're with you, and we appreciate your
12 testimony today.

13 REBEKAH COOK-MACK: Thank you. Good afternoon. My
14 name is Rebekah Cook-Mack. I'm a staff attorney in
15 the Employment Law Unit at Legal Aid. Thank you for
16 the opportunity to testify today. I'm here really to
17 preview March testimony around the budget, b-but
18 wanted to take the opportunity to raise the Mayor's
19 Preliminary Budget proposal, which compounds rather
20 than addresses the chronic underfunding at the
21 Commission on Human Rights- the City Commission on
Human Rights, which is an essential equity partner in
this city. The Mayor's Preliminary Budget continues
the cycle of disinvestment by proposing a budget cut

2 of almost 12- 10 percent to the commission, which we
3 know is now more essential than ever.

4 So I'm here today really to call on the Mayor to
5 reverse his proposed budget cut and instead invest in
6 the commission, so that it's funded at \$25 million in
7 FY '27, which is less than a 2- oh, 2 percent of the
8 city's \$127 billion budget. Just as, as you all know,
9 the City Commission on Human Rights enforces the
10 city's human rights law, which prohibits
11 discrimination in employment, housing, public
12 accommodations. It protects against discriminatory
13 lending practices, retaliation, discriminatory
14 harassment, anti-, uh and bias-based profiling by law
15 enforcement.

16 It is one of the most comprehensive civil rights
17 laws in the country, and it applies to a long list of
18 protected classes beyond those recognized by the
19 federal and state governments.

20 We commend City Council for expanding the law and
21 for having such an expansive view of what civil and
human rights are but we have to express our alarm at
the chronic underfunding at the commission, which
prevents New Yorkers from receiving the justice they
deserve when faced with discrimination and that

1 underfunding is compounded in this 2027 FY budget.
2 The, the small amount of money, 10, that we're
3 calling for the Mayor to add to the CCHR budget is
4 just 10 percent of the \$250 million increase he is
5 proposing for the NYPD budget.

6 It is 4 percent of a proposed \$681 million
7 increase to the miscellaneous budget line. And this
8 CCHR funding would have an oversized impact on the
9 lives of New Yorkers if it was directed towards the
10 commission so that the commission could step up and
11 stand in where the federal government has turned its
12 back on our most vulnerable Black and brown New
13 Yorkers.

14 So we are here today to preview a huge concern in
15 how do we budget equitably and how do we pursue
16 equity in this city by flagging the Mayor's, you
17 know, decrease in the CCHR budget, which is not a
18 decrease that this agent- that it's not even an
19 agency- that this commission can accommodate at this
20 time. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And what would be the ideal
budget?

REBEKAH COOK-MACK: So I'm I'm part of a human
rights law working group here in the city, and we are

1
2 calling on the Mayor to fund CCHR in FY '27 at \$25
3 million. So it's a tiny amount of money, but with
4 that money, we believe CCHR would be able to stand up
5 a real early intervention team so that a New Yorker
6 experiencing, for example, source of income housing
7 discrimination, could call, have their phone call
8 answered, answered and have a resolution within 2
9 weeks, right?

10 We know that timing is essential, and, and
11 without staff to, to pursue that, without people to
12 take these laws seriously, it is impossible for
13 voucher holders to really utilize their vouchers in a
14 reasonable way. So, so that's what we're calling for.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: We appreciate that, and we
16 agree. We want you all to have the capacity to answer
17 phones, address these issues, follow up early on
18 cases, not leave people hanging because you don't
19 have capacity to respond to people.

20 So thank you for your testimony today, all of
21 you, really appreciate it. We look forward to seeing
you at March— the March hearing in a few weeks. Thank
you.

Oh, go ahead. Oh, sorry, sorry.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Hi, I'm Council Member
3 Schulman. So a couple things. One is I hope that you
4 will come to the Budget Hearing when OMB is
5 testifying and particularly when the different, er,
6 different committees are talking to the agencies and
7 all of that.

8 So you know, it's interesting because, hmm, you
9 know, each of us as Council Members get a certain
10 amount of money for discretionary funds, and it's
11 hard without this data and without this information
12 to do that. So I have an interesting district. I have
13 a well - a district that does- that's middle to upper
14 middle class half, then the other half has, has a lot
15 of needs to it. And I focus my attention on the one
16 that has the needs in it. Interestingly enough, it's
17 not where the votes come from, so that's like a
18 little thing, but it's important. And it's- so it's,
19 you know, I represent Forest Hills, Richmond Hill is
20 the big piece and you talk about, like, I wanna know
21 what my Sikh community needs, what the Hindu
community, the Muslim community.

22 So it's hard to know that without the aggregate
23 data that you all are talking about. So I really feel
24 that what you have- what you said is important, but

1 we also need you guys to testify at these hearings
2 because all of that information is taken back and
3 it's really looked at. And I can push it too with the
4 finance folks as well. So I really appreciate it and
5 Assemblyman Green, because I'll- you're always- once
6 an Assemblyman, always an Assemblyman. I worked in
7 the, in the assembly when you were there, but we can
8 talk offline.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Next up, we have the former
11 permanent rep of Grenada Eugene Pursue, Yvette Chen
12 from the Fair Housing Justice Center, and Omar
13 Thompson from the New Harlem Renaissance
14 Incorporated, and Y Jennings.

14 YVETTE CHEN: Good afternoon. My name is Yvette
15 Chen, and I'm a Policy Associate at the Fair Housing
16 Justice Justice Center, a civil rights nonprofit
17 organization serving the NYC area.

17 Our mission is to eliminate housing
18 discrimination, promote accessible and inclusive
19 communities, and strengthen the enforcement of fair
20 housing laws. Chair Sandy Nurse and the Committee on

1 Civil and Human Rights, thank you for the opportunity
2 to testify.

3 Today I'm here to speak on two main points. The
4 first, as a member of the Human Rights Law Working
5 Group, which Rebecca mentioned, we asked the City
6 Council to reverse the mayor's proposed budget cut
7 and increase the CCHR budget to \$25 million.

8 This increase addresses years of underfunding.
9 Secondly, we affirm that CCHR has a critical role in
10 enforcing New York City's fair housing laws to
11 eliminate source of income and disability
12 discrimination and implement the Fair Chance in
13 Housing Law.

14 A well-funded CCHR can properly investigate
15 complaints and provide meaningful relief to New
16 Yorkers experiencing discrimination. Source of income
17 discrimination remains the most common housing
18 complaint with more than 600 claims filed last year.
19 Without sufficient staff to process cases promptly,
20 voucher holders lose housing opportunities, and this
21 undermines critical rental assistance programs like
City FHEPs.

Disability discrimination is the second most
common complaint. Reasonable modification requests

2 such as ramps or grab bars are time-sensitive and
3 essential to basic access. New Yorkers are waiting
4 months or even years to be able to safely enter or
5 use their own homes.

6 Finally, the Fair Chance in Housing Law, which
7 took effect January 1st, 2025, expanded protections
8 for people with criminal records. Yet CCHR has not
9 received additional funding to educate the public or
10 enforce this new law.

11 CCHR is obligated to enforce the law effectively
12 and ensure that the promise of fair housing is real
13 for all New Yorkers. And so we call on the city to
14 increase the agency's budget to \$25 million.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

16 EUGENE PURSUE: Thank you Madam Chairman, for
17 giving me this opportunity. Only yesterday one of the
18 deputy- one of the deputy commissioners asked me to
19 come here and testify. Let me start by saying to you
20 how happy I was to listen to you, the way you
21 eloquently and comprehensively articulated what this
whole hearing is about. I thank you very much for
that and for the probing questions that you asked
that educate us further. Thank you very much.

1
2 When I listened to the Commissioner of CORE, I
3 thought I should be just invited to stand behind her.
4 That's it. But since I've— since I made the trip, I
5 have— I see no more need for me to talk on the
6 technical aspects of budgeting and so forth, only to
7 say thank you again for reminding us that it's one
8 thing to draft an implementation plan, as we heard
9 today. It's quite another thing to implement that
10 plan. I have seen so many plans.

11 I myself have participated in drafting
12 implementation plans on the international level, like
13 Climate Change Agenda 21, and all these plans just
14 die in people's shelves.

15 So I'm very glad that you are here to insist that
16 on the— for the benefit of people who have suffered
17 inequities throughout history that you hear to try
18 and move the needle.

19 So at this point, I just want to touch— tug at
20 your hearts a little. I want to remind us that it was
21 inequity that resulted during the pandemic to more
Black and brown people suffering and dying. This is
something we can't gloss over because we have gotten
a little handle on the pandemic. Now we can't forget

1
2 what happened. I was— I was introduced earlier as a
3 former ambassador of Grenada.

4 Well, I want to say that that's true, but it's
5 also true that I lived in this city as a citizen for
6 60 years now and so I, I, I know the problems of
7 inequity. I'm also a playwright now. I have 5 plays
8 out there now and some of the people, my cast
9 members, live in the Black community. And if you, you
10 have to take - you have to go into those communities
11 to see the impacts of inequity.

12 I have 3 cast members where I have— in one play I
13 have 6 members of the cast, and 3 of them have their
14 sons killed, gunshot and stabbing and drug overdose.
15 This is the kind of impacts that inequity is having
16 on our community. It is no wonder that after 160
17 years after the Emancipation Proclamation was read,
18 the Black communities remain at the bottom of the
19 social and economic totem pole.

20 This is the kind of results from inequity. So
21 when we come here and beg an appeal to you to help in
that area. That's the most I feel we could do at this
point in time, and I urge you to take up the fight on
the behalf of people who have been historically
deprived because of inequity.

1
2 Thank you very much for allowing me this few
3 minutes.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, appreciate you
5 being here, and I assure you anything that I've said
6 here is because I was well prepared by CORE and the
7 Committee Staff but we will definitely be ratcheting
8 up the fight for sure over the next few months.

9 EUGENE PURSUE: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I hope you'll be at our next
11 hearing too.

12 EUGENE PURSUE: I, I'll try.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thanks.

14 OMAR THOMPSON: Good afternoon my name is Omar
15 Thompson. Just, uh thank you for the Chair and the
16 community. -In the Committee, my name is Omar
17 Thompson. I'm a lifelong Harlem resident, a husband,
18 a father of 4, stand-up comedian, actor, producer,
19 and the founder of New Harlem Renaissance youth arts
20 and workforce development organization based in
21 Harlem.

I'm here today because Racial Equity Planning is
not just theoretical for me, it's something that is
personal for me. I grew up in Harlem at a time where
opportunity was scarce. As a young boy you didn't see

1 pathways into media, into business ownership, into
2 the arts. I saw talent everywhere, everywhere around
3 me, but very few structured opportunities. I was
4 fortunate to make it to college. I was fortunate to
5 build a career in media, in comedy and television but
6 I should not have had to rely on luck to access
7 opportunities.

8 Today I own a business on 125th Street. I have
9 built a nonprofit that serves youth in podcast
10 engineering and media, media production and creative
11 workforce training. We create opportunities that I
12 wish I had as a kid. So - sorry about that, but the
13 truth of the matter is that none of this work is
14 sustainable, sustainable without intentional
15 equity-guided budgets and from the city actually.
16 Racial Equity Planning matters because where the city
17 allocates funding determines which communities thrive
18 and which communities continue to fight uphill
19 battles, as we all know. When the Racial Equity Plan
20 is delayed, programs serving Black and brown youth
21 are delayed, workforce pipelines are delayed, mental
health supports are delayed, economic mobility is
delayed. Equity cannot be- cannot be symbolic. It
must be operationalized through budgets.

1
2 I'm here as a father of a Harlem public- my
3 mother- I mean, I'm sorry, my wife is a Harlem Public
4 School Teacher for over 20 years. We have 4 kids that
5 live in the city as well, and the decision made in
6 this room determines whether they have- they can go
7 up. And so, yeah, invest in them early or one that
8 asks them to overcome systematic barriers.

9 I've been honored with the, with the Volunteer
10 Services Award, and I'm receiving my honorary
11 doctor's degree this May, but none of that- none of
12 those recognitions matter if the next generation does
13 not have the clear funded pathways forward.

14 I'mma urge the City Council to release not- maybe
15 the city to release the Racial Equity Plan
16 immediately and ensure that equity is embodied in the
17 2026-27 budget, because equity delayed is opportunity
18 denied. Thank you. My name is Omar Thompson.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much. Thank you
20 for being here. I'm getting eyeballs because we-
21 there's another hearing scheduled for this room
after, so I'm gonna start sticking to the clock
because

OMAR THOMPSON: Gotcha.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I'm getting the, getting the
3 look. Usually I'm very generous when it's, when it's
4 a smaller group, so go ahead.

5 MISS JENNINGS: Hi, my name is Miss Jennings. I
6 spoke at least 5 or 6 times last year. DOY, public
7 safety, basically. I don't speak of race and the
8 5,000 letters that have gone to 4 presidents for 15
9 15 years to go to be busing. I don't speak— I try not
10 to speak of race, but I don't understand that I've
11 been stalked and I've complained to IAB, 311, and
12 every one of these agencies and then the wonderful
13 lady here from CORE I reached out to last year.

14 Now I'm having a lot of pain because creeping
15 around, look at me, and I can't take a third heart
16 attack.

17 The wonderful Mr. Williams, I showed him some of
18 those letters. I saw him years ago and I tried to
19 reach out. I saw him 20 years ago, Reverend
20 Sharpton's place but I saw him when he took the
21 public office.

On October the 4th, I saw DA Bragg and he gave me
a card for Ms. Santiago and Ms. Stevens, I went to
her office when she was with Yusef Salaam, public
safety, about this issue. I get nothing. The marching

1
2 around, the creeping, I don't know what it's about. I
3 have a pain now. I had 2 heart attacks and now
4 working on the 3rd. Best part of this is that where I
5 stay, something with the electric. And I spoke to Con
6 Ed, and the room that I'm in, they turned off the
7 electric in that house. Something very bad.

8 Google it later, it's called sonic attacks, very
9 important, please listen. How do you know your staff
10 have your best interests?

11 For 20 years, I reached out to all of you
12 different wonderful people for help and have gotten
13 nothing but you all get good budgets for your
14 offices, all of you. The NYPD gets, what, 70 percent
15 of their budget from City Council? You should see the
16 letters that I've shown a few of you wonderful
17 people. They cover nothing.

18 Their emails and letters to places you don't
19 wanna know and everybody gets the same email, meaning
20 Wiles Levitt(SP?), Tanya Kinsella K-I-N-S-E-L-L-A,
21 Deputy Police Commissioner, Z. Mandami, and the rest
of 'em all get the same email. A lot.

I pay for my life and safety to be electrocuted
to reach out to all of you people, and I hear from
nobody. My phone is smacked, my computer's hacked,

2 and I don't know if anyone gets the messages. I know
3 I'm being- what do you call it when you- they don't
4 answer your calls, or whatever you call- there's a
5 word for it now in the stalking term. But remember,
6 whoever controls the best directed energy will
7 control the world without weapons and bullets.
8 Remember what I said?

9 I asked for help. The 47th precinct, the worst,
10 the worst, the worst. My hands don't go near nobody,
11 no one. Help.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you, thank you all
13 for your testimony. We will now hear from folks
14 online. If for any reason anybody here wants to test-
15 who's here in person wants to testify but it hasn't,
16 go ahead and see the Sergeant, fill out a slip.
17 Otherwise, we're going to move to online.

18 We have Lily Shapiro from the Fortune Society
19 first, and then Christopher Leon Johnson. Lily you
20 can unmute and start.

21 LILY SHAPIRO: Thank you so much, Chair Nurse and
Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to
testify. My name is Lily Shapiro, and I am Policy
Counsel at the Fortune Society's David Rothenberg
Center for Public Policy. I respectfully,

2 respectfully refer you to my written testimony, so I
3 will try to be succinct since I am also
4 budget-focused on the budget issue here.

5 We simply cannot have our laws exist as rights
6 without true remedies, and that is what we currently
7 have with an under-funded under-resourced Commission
8 on Civil and Human Rights. Thank you to the Council
9 for pushing for more funding last year, which
10 unfortunately did not materialize in the budget.

11 We simply must do more. I was honored to co-lead
12 the successful Fair Chance for Housing campaign and
13 continue to co-lead the coalition.

14 In December of 2023, CCHR submitted a fiscal
15 impact statement for this bill, which is now law,
16 indicating a need for \$1.4 million to hire new staff
17 and to do a public education campaign on just this
18 law alone. That did not happen and thus there has
19 been no public education campaign from the city
20 except for we, the nonprofits in the coalition, have
21 provided.

22 We trained CCHR staff. We have trained the
23 constituent service staff of City Council Members and
24 our state elected officials, other city agency staff,
25 numerous nonprofits, hundreds of directly impacted

1
2 people. We have been getting materials that created
3 into Rikers to inform people of their rights. Using
4 private funds, we launched a public education
5 campaign on the sides of city buses and on Link NYC.
6 And we have nonprofit attorneys in our networks
7 drafting complaints for people for submission to CCHR
8 so their cases will actually move faster.

9 But we, the nonprofits, cannot do it all and we
10 cannot enforce the law. So today I focused on Fair
11 Chance for Housing, but this is much bigger than just
12 one law. Budgets are value statements, and if we
13 truly believe in equity in these times, especially,
14 the city must provide CCHR with at least \$10 million
15 additional in funding for FY '27 and exempt that
16 commission from hiring freezes and PEGs moving
17 forward. Thank you so much for the time today.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Lily. Chris Leon
19 Johnson, you're next.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

21 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello, Nurse. My name
is Christopher Leon Johnson, but I wanna make this
clear that I, I think that you as a Chair need to
start calling on Mamdani and really call him name

1 name by name and ask him when's the exact date he's
2 gonna release this report.

3 I have a big feeling that he's going to wait till
4 after the NY7 election to release that report. He's
5 going to hold that report and many other things
6 hostage to make sure that his person, Claire Valdez,
7 defeat Reynoso for Congress. But I'll make this clear
8 that Eric Adams is no longer here. He's gone. This
9 is— we're in February right now. I think that when
10 people bring up Eric Adams to try to justify about
11 this report, it's just nonsense. People in the City
12 Council and many of these nonprofits need to start
13 calling out Mamdani by his name, but they won't do it
14 because they're scared of losing that FY27 funding
15 when it comes to the Executive Budget.

16 That's what they care about because the Mayor's
17 always have discretionary funding too to throw out
18 these nonprofits. The City Council don't really have
19 that much pull when it comes to this report being
20 released because we know that the City Council,
21 including you Chair, Sandy Nurse, care about these
about the migrants and care about people that are
minorities and protected classes.

1
2 You guys don't have that much pull when it comes
3 to this report. The Mayor's Office has the final
4 final say how this report get pulled out, put out.
5 Mamdani is going to find his way to make it where
6 that his people only get the discretionary funding
7 and his people only get the payouts when it comes to
8 the Executive Budget. And I'm talking about people
9 that only practice Islam.

10 The City Council very soon need to start having a
11 hearing and ask, um-

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I'm sorry, I, we, we don't,
13 we're not, I'm not, we're not engaging in any
14 discriminatory language here, so please stick to the
15 topic.

16 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: I'm not being- this is
17 not being descriptive. I'm just saying, like, very-

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Just as long as we're sticking
19 to the topic. Thank you, Chris.

20 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: I understand we're
21 sticking to the topic, but I'm saying that very soon
the Mayor you need to come out and ask Ms. Demi
Applethaser why she's running around the city and
just soliciting funds to her nonprofit Yama when it-
in return she's going to steer those contracts to her

1
2 preferred people. And this is basically pay to play,
3 pay to play in 2026 and I think the feds need to
4 start investigating stuff very going forward.

5 But I'm just saying right now that soon the City
6 Council needs to start calling this stuff out because
7 this is going to happen for the next 4 years. This is
8 why Mamdani is not gonna really put this report out
9 because he's trying to make sure that his people who
10 only practice Islam get these contracts and
11 discretionary funding, the people that get on his
12 knees, get on their knees for him.

13 So I'm not— this is not racist, this is just
14 fact. So I'm gonna log off here and enjoy your day
15 and take care.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, this is this concludes
17 our hearing. Thank you so much for everyone who
18 participated. I'm now going to close it. [GAVEL]
19
20
21

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 22, 2026