

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE  
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON  
WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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October 9, 2024  
Start: 10:09 a.m.  
Recess: 1:19 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: Diana Ayala,  
Chairperson for the  
Committee on General Welfare

Farah Louis,  
Chairperson for the Committee on  
Women and Gender Equity

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés  
Chris Banks  
Tiffany Cabàn  
Jennifer Gutiérrez  
Chi A. Ossè  
Lincoln Restler  
Kevin C. Riley  
Althea V. Stevens  
Sandra Ung

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

John Rojas  
Chief Special Services Officer at the Human  
Resources Administration

Rima Rivera  
Deputy Commissioner of Domestic Violence Services  
at HRA

Aqueela Winston  
Deputy Commissioner of Shelter and Intake  
Assessment, the Department of Homeless Services

Jennifer DeCarli  
Deputy Commissioner for Family Justice Center  
Operations and Survivor Services at the Mayor's  
Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence

Krystal Murrell  
Self

Stephanie Mansfield  
Self

Daniris Espinal  
Self

Stephanie Woodbine  
Self

Kameeza Nizam-Chattoo  
Sanctuary for Families

Chris Mann  
Win

Shanequa Anne Holida  
Safe Horizon

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

Gabriela Sandoval Requena  
New Destiny Housing

Elijah Pivan Franke  
URI

Blaire Doroshwalther  
URI

Teal Inzunza  
URI

Stephanie Dear  
URI

Karena Lim-Perala  
CFR

Laura Horvath-Roa  
NYC Anti Violence Project

Rachel Kang  
Korean American Family Service Center

Juan Diaz  
Citizen's Committee For Children

Catherine Trapani  
VA GNY

Barbara Many  
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Heaven Berhane  
RISE project director at CJI

Sharlena Powell  
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Shani Adess  
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Janyll Canals  
Advocates for Children

Debbe Donastorg  
Good Shepherd Services

Danielle Emery  
URI

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. This is a  
4 microphone check for the Committee on General Welfare  
5 jointly with Women and Gender Equity. Today's date  
6 is October 9, 2024, located in the Committee Room.  
7 Recording done by Pedro Lugo.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Welcome to  
9 today's New York City Council hearing for the  
10 Committee on General Welfare with the Committee on  
11 Women and Gender Equity. At this time, please  
12 silence all electronic devices. No one may approach  
13 the dais at any time during today's hearing. Chair,  
14 you may begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [GAVEL] Thank you and good  
16 morning everyone and welcome to today's hearing. My  
17 name is Diana Ayala and I am the Deputy Speaker of  
18 the New York City Council and the Chair of the  
19 General Welfare Committee. Am I echoing? Are we  
20 good? Okay.

21 Today, we are holding an Oversight Hearing on  
22 Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence in New York  
23 City Shelter System. As October is Domestic Violence  
24 Awareness month, this hearing is particular pertinent  
25 and I am grateful to my colleagues, the

3 Administration and the advocates who have joined us  
4 today for this important topic.

5 Domestic violence is frequently cited as one of  
6 the most common reasons for entering a shelter  
7 system. In the United States, 80 percent of women  
8 with children struggling with homelessness have also  
9 experienced domestic violence and 57 percent of all  
10 women experiencing homelessness report domestic  
11 violence as a direct cause of their homelessness.

12 In New York, the numbers are even more jarring  
13 with more than one in three individuals experiencing  
14 abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime. And  
15 while there has been a general decline in violent  
16 crime in New York City, according to the most recent  
17 fatality review report published by the Mayor's  
18 Office to End Gender and Domestic Violence, domestic  
19 violence homicides increased by nearly 30 percent  
20 between 2021 and 2022.

21 According to a recent report released by New  
22 Destiny Housing, more families with children entering  
23 DHS shelters due to domestic violence than evictions.  
24 In Fiscal Year 2023, 20.3 percent of the family - of  
25 families- the families with children population enter

1  
2 DHS shelters due to abuse, with evictions responsible  
3 for 11.1 percent.

4 More than one in five families with children in  
5 the DHS system identify domestic violence as the  
6 reason for their homelessness. In calendar year  
7 2023, 10,842 survivors sought refuge in HRAs domestic  
8 violence shelter system which comprises a slight  
9 increase over calendar year 2022. Most of the people  
10 who live in New York City domestic violence shelters  
11 are children. It is important for the Committee to  
12 understand whether there is sufficient capacity to  
13 meet the needs and explore what happens when  
14 survivors must enter the general homeless shelter  
15 system. We need assess what can be done to enhance  
16 domestic violence services, especially in  
17 accommodating new or shifting needs for families that  
18 emerge in the aftermath of the pandemic and with the  
19 recent increase in asylum seekers in New York City.  
20 The Committee would like to know how we may be able  
21 to better support those in the existing system and  
22 how they are varying at securing state permanent and  
23 stable housing without having to answer general DHS.

24 We will also hear two pieces of preconsidered  
25 legislation, which I have sponsored, a bill to expand

1  
2 the current reporting requirements exist from  
3 domestic violence shelters to include both domestic  
4 violence emergency shelter exits as well as domestic  
5 violence here to shelter exists and a bill to amend  
6 the existing reporting requirements regarding  
7 multiagency emergency housing assistance to include  
8 reporting on applications for domestic violence  
9 emergency shelters and applications for domestic  
10 violence tier two shelters by household size. These  
11 bills, which come from recommendations in the New  
12 Destiny Report will help us to better understand the  
13 needs of survivors so that we can provide them with  
14 the most appropriate support.

15 I look forward to hearing from the administration  
16 and advocate today and gather feedback on the  
17 oversight topic and legislation. I would like to  
18 recognize that we have Council Member Ung on Zoom and  
19 have been joined by Council Member Gutiérrez.

20 I would also like to thank the Committee staff  
21 who worked hard to prepare this hearing, Aminta  
22 Kilawan, Senior Legislative Counsel, Sahar Moazami,  
23 Legislative Counsel, Penina Rosenberg, Policy  
24 Analyst, Julia Haramis, Unit Head, Elisabeth  
25 Childers-Garcia, Finance Analyst, Anne Driscoll,



3 data analyst and finally my staff Elsie Encarnacion  
4 Chief of Staff. I will now like to turn it over to  
5 Chair Louis for her opening remarks.

6 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you Deputy Speaker  
7 Ayala. Good morning everyone. My name is Farah  
8 Louis. I'm the Chair of the Committee on Women and  
9 Gender Equity. I'd like to begin by thanking my  
10 colleague Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, who is the  
11 Chair of the Committee on General Welfare for holding  
12 this very important hearing. I would also like to  
13 welcome everyone else who is joining us here this  
14 morning. We appreciate your time and participation.

15 Today we are here to explore how best to support  
16 domestic violence survivors in the New York City  
17 Shelter System. As the Deputy Speaker stated in her  
18 opening remarks, domestic violence is among the most  
19 common reason individuals enter the shelter system.

20 A recent July 2024 report by the New Destiny  
21 Housing has taken a comprehensive look at the unique  
22 barriers and challenges faced by persons who flee  
23 dangerous situation in order to seek safety for  
24 themselves and their families. Access to safe  
25 housing is the cornerstone which allows survivors of  
domestic violence to begin their road to recovery.

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3 Part of the pathway to health and healing for  
4 survivors must include foundational support of long  
5 term housing stability so people may access the  
6 supports and services they need to succeed.

7 Safe housing is the key that allows people to  
8 begin to deal with the effects of trauma, economic  
9 hardship and the physical and emotional aftermath of  
10 domestic violence. We know circumstances are  
11 different for every survivor and there is no one size  
12 fits all solution for those who seek help in the New  
13 York City Shelter System.

14 With that said, Committees look forward - these  
15 Committees look forward to hearing from the  
16 Administration, advocates and members of the public  
17 and other interested stakeholders, including those  
18 who have lived experiences, who have taken the time  
19 to come here today to join us and we thank you all  
20 for your time and advocacy. I would also like to  
21 thank my own staff as well as those of the other  
22 Committee who worked hard to prepare for this  
23 hearing.

24 Finally, I'd like to thank the Women and Gender  
25 Equity Committee Staff, Legislative Counsel Sahar  
Moazami, Legislative Counsel Rachel Conte(SP?),

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3 Senior Legislative Policy Analyst Cristy Dwyer, Veda  
4 Yagnik, Finance Analyst, Rose Martinez, Assistant  
5 Deputy Director of Data Operations Unit, as well as  
6 my Legislative Liaison Daniel Heredia(SP?), Blake  
7 Shaw(SP?) and my new legislative fellow Michaila  
8 Belmere(SP?).

9 I will not pass it to my colleague Deputy Speaker  
10 Ayala. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I would now like to turn it  
12 over to our Committee Counsel to swear in the members  
13 of the Administration.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Will you please raise your  
15 right hand? Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
16 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this  
17 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member  
18 questions? Thank you. You may begin when ready.

19 JOHN ROJAS: Good morning Deputy Speaker Ayala,  
20 Chair Louis, and members of the Committee on General  
21 Welfare and the Committee on Women and Gender Equity.  
22 My name is John Rojas and I serve as Chief Special  
23 Services Officer at the Human Resources  
24 Administration within Department of Social Services.  
25 My portfolio, among other things, includes oversight  
of the city's domestic violence shelter system. I

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3 would like to thank the Committees for the  
4 opportunity to testify today on the work to support  
5 survivors of domestic violence that are experiencing  
6 homelessness. I am joined by my colleagues Rima  
7 Rivera, Deputy Commissioner of Domestic Violence  
8 Services at HRA, Aqueela Winston, Deputy Commissioner  
9 of Shelter and Intake Assessment, the Department of  
10 Homeless Services and DHS, and Jennifer DeCarli,  
11 Deputy Commissioner for Family Justice Center  
12 Operations and Survivor Services at the Mayor's  
13 Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence, End  
14 GBV.

15 As you are aware, October is Domestic Violence  
16 Awareness Month, giving us all the opportunity to  
17 lift up survivors, their loved ones, and survivor  
18 advocates, and our shared communities' efforts as we  
19 work to create the positive change we must  
20 continually pursue. We salute their work and I  
21 welcome the opportunity to update the Council on our  
22 initiatives to support survivors of domestic violence  
23 in the domestic violence shelter system.

24 I would like to begin by sharing information with  
25 anyone in the public who may need help. If you or  
someone you know is experiencing domestic or gender

3 based violence, help is available. The New York City  
4 24 hour Domestic Hotline is 1-800-621-HOPE. You can  
5 reach the Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-  
6 373-7888. The New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-  
7 Violence Project at 212-714-1141, and Barrier Free  
8 Living, with a focus on assisting individuals with  
9 disabilities at 212-533-4358. We understand the  
10 importance of centering the client, client family  
11 needs, and strive to be a resource for linking  
12 survivors of domestic violence to culturally  
13 competent care during their time of need.

14 We welcome the opportunity to share our work to  
15 ensure that survivors have access to safe living  
16 environment and trauma informed services, both within  
17 the shelter system and as they safely transition to  
18 the community.

19 HRA administers the largest domestic violence  
20 shelter system in the country. The emergency  
21 domestic violence shelter system consists of 54  
22 confidential facilities through all five boroughs,  
23 comprised of 42 emergency shelters and 12 family  
24 transitional shelters, commonly referred to as Tier  
25 II. There are 2,290 emergency domestic violence  
shelter beds, which serve both individuals and

1 families. There are 628 family transitional shelter  
2 units open systemwide. The emergency beds provide  
3 trauma informed shelter services to domestic violence  
4 survivors who are at immediate risk. Only domestic  
5 survivors who are stabilized in the emergency system  
6 can be transferred to Tier II shelters. In Fiscal  
7 Year 2024, the HRA Domestic Violence system served  
8 11,223 adults and children in emergency and family  
9 transition shelters. Shelters serve as an entry way  
10 to further services and assistance, including  
11 children - child care services, housing assistances,  
12 benefit entitlement assistance, financial development  
13 service and economic empowerment programs. Shelters  
14 also serve as the entry point for expressive  
15 therapies, for example, art play and recreational  
16 stress reduction skill techniques, mental and  
17 substance abuse counseling and community based  
18 medical providers.

19  
20 Having provided that overview, I will now show an  
21 overview of intake, the array of services and  
22 linkages to care shelters provide, and the pathway to  
23 greater independence for safe moveout.

24 There are three pathways to intake. One pathway  
25 is through the Safe Horizon hotline. Survivors can

3 connect with advocates to receive services,  
4 counseling and information about available resources  
5 to maintain their and their family safety. Support  
6 can include crisis counseling, safety planning,  
7 information and resources, and assistance finding  
8 domestic violence shelters.

9 The second pathway is through the No Violence  
10 Again or NoVA screening at DHS's Prevention  
11 Assistance and Temporary Housing PATH intake center  
12 or at the Adult Family Intake Center AFIC, or at a  
13 single intake center.

14 A third pathway to intake is through community  
15 based referral that can be local precincts,  
16 neighborhood hospitals, family justice centers or DV  
17 non-residential community providers or other social  
18 service providers.

19 DV Emergency Shelter Providers are required to  
20 provide several essential services. They provide  
21 hotline services, which include crisis intervention  
22 counseling and information and referrals, including  
23 referrals to other available residential programs  
24 when the facility is at capacity. They also provide  
25 safe and secure housing. Shelters are required to  
offer housing with appropriate security measures,

3 including safety locks and 24-hour security. Housing  
4 must be clean and provide basic amenities. They also  
5 provide support services including case management  
6 services, counseling, support groups, advocacy and  
7 assistance obtaining social services.

8 Shelters also provide child care and education.  
9 Services should include arrangement for child care,  
10 offering age appropriate recreational and social  
11 activities on a daily basis during regular business  
12 hours for children residing in the facility. The  
13 provision of appropriate counseling services to  
14 children residing at the facility, and educational  
15 support for children of survivors.

16 Medical services meaning providers establish  
17 linkages with accredited medical institutions or  
18 clinics with qualified medical personnel for example,  
19 physicians or nurse practitioners for health  
20 examinations, follow up visits, and mental health  
21 services. They also provide transportation, meaning  
22 to the extent possible, arranging for transportation  
23 to the facility in an emergency, and making  
24 transportation available for residents in order for  
25 the residents to secure legal, medical, housing,  
employment, or public assistance services or assist



3 residents to obtain available public or private  
4 transportation when possible. And lastly, we provide  
5 referrals to other social service supports. This may  
6 be legal services on site or in the community  
7 education and outreach activity.

8 The New York State Office of Temporary Disability  
9 Assistance regulations mandate that within ten days  
10 of admission to a shelter, the provider and adult  
11 members of the resident family must develop an  
12 independent living plan or an ILP. ILP's must be  
13 reviewed with the family at least once every two  
14 weeks and revised as necessary, to assist the family  
15 in obtaining permanent housing. We are cognizant of  
16 the fact that in the sphere of human services, and  
17 particularly with respect to individuals and family  
18 surviving domestic violence, one size does not fit  
19 all.

20 The services offered including housing and  
21 benefits assistance, financial development, economic  
22 empowerment programs, mental health and substance  
23 abuse counseling and child care. Whether provided on  
24 site or through partnerships are a key element and a  
25 pathway towards great independence and moveout.

3 New York State imposes limits on emergency DV  
4 shelters. Survivors have 90 days, then a potential  
5 for a 45-day extension, and then the potential for a  
6 final additional 45-day extension, meaning a New York  
7 City imposed maximum of 180 days in an emergency DV  
8 shelter.

9 The 1.4 percent vacancy rate, coupled with 180-  
10 day maximum emergency DV shelter limit, means that we  
11 do have exits from DV emergency shelter to DHS  
12 shelter. We are continually working to ensure that  
13 the transition is seamless as possible. That means  
14 bolstering our system to allow for more warm handoffs  
15 and establishing back office links so a housing  
16 shopping letter does not fall away in the transition  
17 from DV emergency shelter to a DHS shelter. I can  
18 report that in 2025, the clients make every effort to  
19 even further progress in strengthening the HRA-DHS  
20 links to provide even more robust support services to  
21 survivors making that transition.

22 We operate under a regulatory framework that  
23 includes New York State and federal laws that seek to  
24 uphold the safety, privacy and standards of service  
25 of our clients. The New York State Domestic Violence  
Prevention Act of 1987 requires counties to provide

1  
2 shelter and services to survivors of domestic  
3 violence. Further, it establishes that funding for  
4 these programs. The New York State Office of  
5 Children and Family Services, OCFS promulgates  
6 regulations for licensure and the standards for  
7 establishment and maintenance of residential and non-  
8 residential domestic violence programs.

9 The New York State Office of Temporary Disability  
10 and Temporary Disability Assistance, OTDA authorizes  
11 DSS/HRA to administer the financial and contractual  
12 requirements of the domestic violence Tier II system.  
13 In addition, federal law also provides parameters for  
14 our operations of the shelters, program and services  
15 we administer, including the Family Violence  
16 Prevention and Services Act, the Violence Against  
17 Women Act VAWA, and the Victims Crime Act VOCA.

18 We keep this regulatory framework in mind in  
19 service delivery and in examining legislative  
20 proposals.

21 Turning to the legislation under consideration at  
22 today's hearing, File Number 2572 is an amendment to  
23 existing Law 83 of 2018, where DSS reports annually  
24 on exits from domestic violence emergency shelters.  
25 File Number 2572 would expand the current reporting

1 requirements from exists from domestic violence  
2 shelters to include both domestic violence, emergency  
3 shelter exits as well as domestic Violence tier II  
4 shelter exits. This report would also be required  
5 monthly.  
6

7 File Number 2573 is a further amendment to Local  
8 Law 79 of 2022, which was previously modified  
9 pursuant to Local Law 103 of 2023. File Number 2573  
10 would amend the existing reporting requirements  
11 regarding multiagency emergency housing assistance to  
12 include reporting on applications for domestic  
13 violence emergency shelters and applications for  
14 domestic violence Tier II shelters by household size.

15 All reporting legislation, including legislation  
16 that amends exiting local law mandated reports  
17 require careful consideration to access for both the  
18 feasibility and the capacity to produce the report in  
19 a timely, accurate manner. What may appear at a  
20 surface level, as a minor alteration to capture more  
21 information in preexisting reports, may ultimately  
22 require significant adjustment to workflows, IT  
23 systems, and processes. That is why we would like to  
24 continue the discussion with the Council beyond this  
25 hearing with a view to amending the parameters of

3 this proposed legislation in a manner that best  
4 aligns with our ongoing obligations to uphold  
5 clients' privacy. Our capacity to produce this  
6 information, our capability to report in a timely  
7 manner and our ability to ensure the accuracy of the  
8 data to truly reflect the metrics a given report aims  
9 to capture.

10 In terms of New York State legislation, I would  
11 like to draw the Council's attention to A. 2583-A/S.  
12 15-A Hevesi Gounardes, legislation that would  
13 "authorize certain shelters for victims of domestic  
14 violence to be reimbursed for any payment  
15 differential for a household single individual in a  
16 room intended to be for double occupancy where a  
17 single occupancy room is not available. In the  
18 previous state legislative session, the bill passed  
19 with both houses and is pending approval by the  
20 governor. We strongly encourage signing of this bill  
21 into law. In New York City, this legislation would  
22 increase the city's capacity to house single adult  
23 survivors of domestic violence.

24 I will conclude by expressing gratitude to our  
25 staff, our providers, and the stakeholders, including  
survivors, survivor advocates, and residents of our

1  
2 communities who are working to keep a keen focus on  
3 domestic violence and further steps we can take to  
4 keep our fellow New Yorkers safe. As I said earlier,  
5 one size does not fit all. We are continually  
6 learning and taking onboard the insights you as  
7 Council, the community of stakeholders, and public  
8 hearings like this offer. Thank you for the  
9 opportunity to testify today and we look forward to  
10 your questions.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I want to  
12 acknowledge that we've also been joined by Council  
13 Members Riley and Banks. Packed house, sorry about  
14 that. We have a competing hearing next door and it's  
15 pretty packed over there as well, so try to find you  
16 a seat. Alright, good morning and thank you all for  
17 being here to testify. I'll start my questions with  
18 the vacancy rates at DV shelters. Can you tell you  
19 us what the current vacancy rate for each HRA/DV  
20 emergency shelter and HRAs DV Tier II shelters is?

21 RIMA RIVERA: Good morning. So happy to be here  
22 and able to speak today and answer any questions you  
23 may have. So, your question was the occupancy,  
24 vacancy rate?

25

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3 The vacancy rate for our emergency shelters is  
4 12.7 percent and the vacancy rate for our tier II  
5 shelters is 7.6 percent.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Now, would you consider to  
7 those to be relatively lower than usual or is it -

8 RIMA RIVERA: Usually it's within the - right, it  
9 hadn't really decreased?

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Alright and in the MMR, HRA  
11 stated that they have a capacity of 2,290 domestic  
12 violence emergency beds and a capacity of 593 for  
13 domestic violence tier II units. Does HRA feel that  
14 the current DV shelter system has enough capacity to  
15 fully meet this level of demand?

16 RIMA RIVERA: Actually, now it's 628 tier II  
17 units. We recently added 105 units so there were 96  
18 units that came onboard at the end of December 2023  
19 and an additional 9 ADA units that came onboard of  
20 March of 2024. Currently, our portfolio serves all -  
21 in regards to your question regarding capacity, our  
22 portfolio serves all family compositions and really  
23 it's based on the availability of occupancy. There  
24 may be a unit that is available but it doesn't meet  
25 the needs of the client who is searching for  
accommodations at the time. It's a very complicated

3 search for a survivor in the sense that they have to  
4 find accommodations that are safe for them in a safe  
5 area and that meets the needs of their family  
6 composition.

7 Also, something to consider is that unlike DHS,  
8 DV shelters, most DV shelters are configured in a way  
9 where it's shared living. So, it could be that  
10 families seeking shelter in the DV system may not be  
11 accepting of that shared living experience.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Like shared living, you mean  
13 the same room or like sharing a bathroom?

14 RIMA RIVERA: Yeah, so they share the living  
15 area, like the bath and living area and each family  
16 has their own accommodation.

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: But they don't share the same  
18 sleeping quarters?

19 RIMA RIVERA: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, okay. So, I mean but  
21 the question is really, do you feel that there is  
22 adequate capacity to fully meet the needs?

23 RIMA RIVERA: We are always reviewing our  
24 portfolio and accessing need and we will speak to our  
25 office of budget administration and OMB if there's  
26 need to increase capacity.



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3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, does that happen often?

4 JOHN RAJAS: Actually Deputy Speaker Ayala, we  
5 are actually in the midst of planning for the release  
6 of an RFP for additional emergency shelter beds, so  
7 we hope by the end of the year to be able to release  
8 an RFP seeking an additional 94 beds. And this RFP  
9 seeks to target single adult households of one and  
10 with a special emphasis on LGBTQIA survivors. The  
11 facilities can't exclusively serve single adults that  
12 we've consulted with our oversight agency at the  
13 state OCFS and the facilities must always accept  
14 families if that's a requirement of the shelter  
15 system but there is an emphasis on single adults and  
16 a special focus on LGBTQIA survivors. So, we will -  
17 we hope and intent to expand with the issuance of  
18 this RFP later this year.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And is that RFP informed by a  
20 specific need that is occurring now?

21 JOHN ROJAS: So, we are replacing beds that we  
22 had lost but we are converting them to with a focus  
23 for the single adults.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Gotcha.

25 JOHN ROJAS: Given the input we receive from our  
providers and the community.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Hmm, hmm, okay that's fair.

4 Uhm, can you tell us what has been the average length  
5 of stay for clients in the HDV shelter, emergency  
6 shelter and DVT are two shelters prior to the  
7 pandemic and since the onset of the pandemic, and in  
8 Fiscal Year 2024 to date?

9 RIMA RIVERA: Sure, so, it seems as if the  
10 clients that we serve during the past six years  
11 before the pandemic, during the pandemic and post  
12 pandemic has remained relatively the same. There  
13 haven't been much fluctuation. There was a little  
14 decrease during 2020 during the onset of the pandemic  
15 but uhm, if you just give me a second, I'll just find  
16 -

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Can you bring the mic down a  
18 little bit?

19 RIMA RIVERA: Sure.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thanks.

21 RIMA RIVERA: So, if you give me a second, I can  
22 actually look for those numbers.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

24 RIMA RIVERA: Thank you. So, in 2019, we served  
25 11,123 individuals in both our emergency and tier II  
systems. In 2020, it's just a little down to 9,439.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I'm sorry, could you repeat  
4 that number?

5 RIMA RIVERA: Oh.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: The second number.

7 RIMA RIVERA: In 2020, 9,439. In 2021, 10,201.  
8 In 2022, 10,640 and in 2023, 10,842. So, it seems as  
9 if we're increasing incrementally.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, so 2019 was 11,123?

11 RIMA RIVERA: 2019 was 11,123.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Alright, okay. So, slight  
13 increases, okay. Alright, uhm, can you tell us what  
14 is the current average cost per night for DV  
15 emergency shelters?

16 JOHN ROJAS: So, for the emergency shelters, the  
17 average per diem is \$123 per person, per night. For  
18 our tier II shelters, it's \$193 per night, per unit.  
19 So, there might be multiple individuals in a tier II  
20 but they get the standard rate of \$193 versus in an  
21 emergency shelter, they get paid by person.

22 So, if there's more than one person, they'll get  
23 that \$123 per person.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Oh, okay.

25 JOHN ROJAS: So it varies between the tier II and  
the emergency shelter system.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And the tier II is per unit?

4 JOHN ROJAS: Correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Oh interesting. Can you tell  
6 us what percentage of clients existing in HRAs DV  
7 emergency shelters are placed in DV tier II shelters?

8 JOHN ROJAS: Can you repeat the last part?

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Oh sorry. What percentage of  
10 clients existing HRAs DV emergency shelters are  
11 placed in DV tier II shelters?

12 RIMA RIVERA: 26 percent.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And for those that don't end  
14 up in a Tier II shelter, how many are placed in DHS  
15 shelters?

16 RIMA RIVERA: That would be 22 percent. This is  
17 Fiscal Year 2024.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Alright and how many are  
19 placed in permanent housing?

20 RIMA RIVERA: From our emergency shelter, 9  
21 percent and from our tier II shelter where a client  
22 has the ability to spend more time searching, 39  
23 percent.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, what are the other top  
25 places that clients exit to?

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3 RIMA RIVERA: So, so, 24 percent have left on  
4 their own. This if from emergency shelters.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Hmm, hmm.

6 RIMA RIVERA: 8 percent have moved in with  
7 relatives, 5 percent - well 5 percent have  
8 transferred from one emergency shelter to another.  
9 Sometimes they have a need for emergency transfer  
10 from one shelter to another. 4 percent secured an  
11 apartment on their own and 2 percent return to a  
12 former apartment without a batterer. 2 percent left  
13 New York City, 2 percent obtain permanent housing  
14 using a FHEPS B voucher, 1 percent City FHEPS, 1  
15 percent Section 8 HPD, 1 percent Section 8 NYCHA, 1  
16 percent return to a batterer and we have a 1 percent  
17 none of the above.

18 From our Tier II exits, our tier II exit data  
19 tells us that there were 22 percent that the provider  
20 indicated none of the above. 18 percent left tier II  
21 to go to PATH DHS, 12 percent left on their own, 11  
22 percent used FHEPS B vouchers to find permanent  
23 housing, 8 percent City FHEPS voucher, 8 percent  
24 Section 8 NYCHA, 8 percent apartment secured on own,  
25 4 percent Section 8 HPD, 4 percent moved in with

1  
2 relatives, and then there was a 4 percent that  
3 transferred from one tier to another.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Perfect, thank you.

5 RIMA RIVERA: You're welcome.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: According to the Mayor's  
7 Management Report, they state that the percent of  
8 eligible families seeking shelter at Prevention  
9 Assistance and Temporary Housing, PATH who entered  
10 HRAs domestic violence shelters has decreased by 9  
11 percent from 23 percent in Fiscal Year 2023 to 14.1  
12 percent in Fiscal Year 2024. This continues a  
13 downward trend reported since Fiscal Year 2021. Can  
14 HRA explain why the percentage of eligible families  
15 continues to decrease even though we know that  
16 overall rates of domestic violence in the city remain  
17 constant?

18 RIMA RIVERA: I'm sorry Speaker, Deputy Speaker,  
19 can you repeat that question?

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, can HRA explain why the  
21 percentage of eligible families continues to decrease  
22 even though we know that the overall rates of DV in  
23 the city remain constant.

24 RIMA RIVERA: The number of eligible families  
25 that are placed in our DV system is - at PATH?

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3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Hmm, hmm. You want me to  
4 read the question again?

5 RIMA RIVERA: Sure, so you're asking?

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, the Mayor's Management  
7 Report states that the percent of eligible families  
8 seeking shelter at PATH, who entered HRAs domestic  
9 violence shelters has decreased by 9 percent from 23  
10 percent in Fiscal Year 2023 to 14.1 percent in Fiscal  
11 Year 2024.

12 RIMA RIVERA: So, these are clients that are  
13 referred to our NoVA team at PEP intake. These DH's  
14 applicants are referred to our team when they  
15 disclose that there's been a history of DV or they've  
16 experienced DV. They are screened at DHS by social  
17 workers in their resource room and referred to NoVA  
18 for an additional screening.

19 Many of these clients are not - DHS made the  
20 referral so it could be that many are not actually  
21 searching for shelter. They're being screened  
22 because they disclosed that there was a DV incident.  
23 So, although a client or a DHS applicant may actually  
24 be eligible for DV shelter, it could be that they're  
25 not amendable to transfer from the DHS system into  
the DV shelter system.

3 So again, our ability to link a client to DV  
4 shelter can be challenging because all the - the  
5 variables that I mentioned before. Is there  
6 accommodations at the time that can meet their needs?  
7 Can there be safety placed in an area that is safe  
8 for them? Can they meet their family configuration?  
9 Can they meet their immediate needs?

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, alright, I'm moving  
11 onto City FHEPS. So, can the family justice centers  
12 process referrals for City FHEPS? Either to stay or  
13 to leave through Homebase?

14 JENNIFER DECARLI: Hi everyone, good morning.  
15 Can you hear me? Sorry. It's great to be here with  
16 all of you, Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Louis, other  
17 Council Members. So, at the family justice centers,  
18 we are able to support folks with linking to homebase  
19 offices for FHEPS B applications. We don't process  
20 City FHEPS applications onsite.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: You don't, okay. If not,  
22 what is the process to apply? Do survivors have to  
23 go in person to apply at our HRA office?

24 JENNIFER DECARLI: You mean to apply for FHEPS B  
25 applications?

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah.



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3 JENNIFER DECARLI: For FHEPS B. So, for FHEPS B,  
4 we are able to link with survivors remotely. We are  
5 able to link with survivors remotely or in person  
6 through our community partner network and we're not  
7 actually doing the application with the FJC we're  
8 just certifying that someone is eligible and then  
9 linking them to the appropriate homebase office and  
10 we can do that for somebody who comes in person like  
11 I said or remotely through our partner network.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. That makes since,  
13 okay. The Administration expanded eligibility for  
14 New York City 1515 supportive housing to include  
15 survivors with children this summer, which I'm really  
16 excited about. How many survivors of children - I  
17 know this is fairly recent but do we know what the  
18 number of survivors with children is that have been  
19 granted supportive housing since the expansion?

20 JOHN ROJAS: So, the Administration along with  
21 the Council is very happy that our existing 1515  
22 supportive housing was expanded. We expanded that in  
23 early summer and on July 30<sup>th</sup> we released an addenda  
24 to our 1515 RFP's for both scattered site and  
25 congregate to expand the support of housing. So,  
given that it was on July 30<sup>th</sup>, we're still waiting

1  
2 for proposals to come in so we can score them and  
3 we're hoping and we do know some of our  
4 collaboratives, our DV providers will probably be  
5 applying.

6 So, as of yet, we don't have any specifically for  
7 based on the new revised domestic violence criteria  
8 that's been included, however, I do want to highlight  
9 that individuals and families who are survivors of  
10 domestic violence, can be found eligible for the  
11 existing portfolio of supportive housing, including  
12 1515. The various New York, including the state  
13 program ESSHI, Empire State Supportive Housing  
14 Initiative which includes targeted units for domestic  
15 violence survivors and I think Rima you could speak a  
16 bit to that but we have made many placements to ESSHI  
17 providers who have housing, supportive housing  
18 specifically for domestic violence survivors both  
19 primarily families.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Were single domestic violence  
21 survivors also included as an eligible population for  
22 the program?

23 JOHN ROJAS: I'm sorry, say that again.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Were singles considered an  
25 eligible population for the expansion of the program?

3 JOHN ROJAS: For the expansion for under 1515 was  
4 expanded with the families with children category  
5 only.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: No singles?

7 JOHN ROJAS: No.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, do we know how many  
9 congregate and scattered sites units with families  
10 with children remain unawarded?

11 JOHN ROJAS: Approximately 700.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Has the administration  
13 considered reallocating unawarded scattered site  
14 units to congregate?

15 JOHN ROJAS: Those conversations are occurring.  
16 It's a larger conversation with our other providers  
17 and stakeholders.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: We've been joined by Council  
19 Member Althea Stevens. Good morning Council Member.  
20 Two more questions and then I'll transfer it over.  
21 The Administration calls - sees to streamline  
22 survivors from HRA domestic violence to DHS shelters  
23 in 2022. Currently, survivors with children who are  
24 not eligible to be finding a home or transfer to an  
25 HRA domestic violence hereto shelter must apply to  
shelter at DHS's intake center in the Bronx. Without

1  
2 a guaranteed placement and with a risk of being  
3 turned away, is the Administration planning to  
4 reinstate the streamlining policy and if so, what is  
5 the timeline and what is the criteria?

6 RIMA RIVERA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. Great  
7 question, yes we are. So, currently you know  
8 streamlining activities, they were paused and  
9 inclined to transition from DV shelter to DHS. We  
10 work with DHS on a warm handoff. We provide them  
11 with a letter for information so that the client can  
12 be safely placed at a DSH shelter. And I also want  
13 to go back to because you asked a question earlier  
14 about clients who would be referred to our NoVA team  
15 at PATH.

16 If they're not placed in DV shelter or they  
17 refuse placement or you know transition to a DV  
18 shelter system is not amenable to them. We do enter  
19 information into the DHS care system, as to how to  
20 safely place information that can help them safely  
21 place this client in the DHS system. We give them  
22 areas that are - that have been identified as a safe  
23 area for the client and also information on the  
24 person who has caused harm. So, I just want to make  
25 sure that that's noted.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I appreciate that. Uhm, can  
4 you tell us - are there any cost implications related  
5 to rezoning streamlining?

6 RIMA RIVERA: In the sense that there - no there  
7 isn't.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Would there be any revisions  
9 to the previous process?

10 RIMA RIVERA: We are working with our colleagues  
11 at DHS to enhance the process including reporting on  
12 clients that transition from DHS. Uh from DV to DHS  
13 through this process.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, alright I will now  
15 transfer to Council Member Louis for questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you Deputy Speaker and  
17 good morning again. I want to briefly discuss HPD  
18 homeless set asides. We know that survivors in  
19 HRA/DV shelter cannot access these units. The Mayor  
20 stated that the Administration will reverse this  
21 administrative decision and open up units to families  
22 and individuals in the five shelter system. So, I  
23 wanted to know if you all can share with us, has the  
24 change gone into effect? And if not, when do you  
25 anticipate that would happen?

3 RIMA RIVERA: Sure, so I can let you know as to  
4 our progress. So, we are currently in the first  
5 phase of providing access to families in DV shelter  
6 to HPD set asides. And the first phase really  
7 consists of beginning the application process, and  
8 should the family transition from DV to DHS, that  
9 application could be completed once that client  
10 enters DHS.

11 The second phase will be the ability for DV, DVS  
12 and our providers to submit applications directly to  
13 HPV.

14 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: When does the second phase  
15 start?

16 RIMA RIVERA: Right now, we're getting through  
17 the first phase, so but we will let you know.

18 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay, do you have an  
19 anticipated time when the first phase will end?

20 RIMA RIVERA: Right now we are negotiating some  
21 technical difficulties ensuring that whatever  
22 information we enter into the system is safely  
23 transferred to HPD, because of course you want to  
24 maintain client confidentiality.

25 So, we hope that we'll be able to complete the  
first phase. I think it's not going to be completed

3 by the end of this calendar year but I'm hoping by  
4 early next 2025.

5 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: So, Fiscal Year 2026?

6 RIMA RIVERA: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Got it. How many survivors  
8 in the DHS shelter system were able to move to an  
9 apartment set aside for New Yorkers in the shelter in  
10 FY24?

11 AQUEELA WINSTON: Good morning, thank you for the  
12 question and for the ability to be here and provide  
13 information on the services that we provide. So,  
14 while we do not specifically track HPD set aside, -  
15 sorry, simply track data for HPD set asides, I can  
16 report that for our entire NoVA population, there  
17 were 870 placements. That includes both subsidized  
18 and unsubsidized for Fiscal Year 2024.

19 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: When can we get the stats for  
20 the other sites?

21 AQUEELA WINSTON: I can follow up to get that  
22 information to you.

23 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay, if you could send that  
24 to Committee Counsel, we would appreciate it.

25 AQUEELA WINSTON: Sure.

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3 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you. In 2022, New York  
4 City took a major step in homelessness prevention by  
5 creating a housing stability program for domestic  
6 violence survivors, also known as microgrants.  
7 That's the elephant in the room. The program managed  
8 by End NGBV provides low barrier grants to survivor  
9 and connects them to the supportive services with the  
10 goal of helping them maintain housing. Last year,  
11 the Adams Administration allocated \$1.29 million to  
12 establish a housing stability program for survivors  
13 of domestic violence and gender based violence.

14 The City Council and advocates called on the  
15 Administration to increase and baseline funding for  
16 the program and to include an additional \$4.8 million  
17 for FY25. Can you share with the public today the  
18 eligibility criteria and the application process for  
19 End GBV's microgram program?

20 JENNIFER DECARLI: Thank you Chair Louis for that  
21 question and we're really excited to officially  
22 launch that program in July of this year, July 1,  
23 2024. We've been working really hard with our  
24 contracted providers to establish a very low barrier  
25 eligible for applications for the program. And so,  
we are meeting with them regularly and we're in the



1  
2 midst of kind of getting a uniform application that  
3 we'd be happy to share with the Council. I know  
4 there's a report due by the end of the year to the  
5 Council on the program and we'd be happy to share  
6 that uniform application by then.

7 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay, how many survivors have  
8 applied for the microgrant program?

9 JENNIFER DECARLI: So, we are collecting the data  
10 quarterly and we are meeting with providers and  
11 collecting that data right now. So, again -

12 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Will you say that again, I'm  
13 sorry.

14 JENNIFER DECARLI: Sorry, I'm talking really  
15 quickly. We're meeting with the providers regularly  
16 and we are getting quarterly data. So, our first  
17 quarterly report will be due like right about now and  
18 we'll be getting report to the Council by the end of  
19 the year.

20 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay. What is the average  
21 microgrant amount requested this calendar year for  
22 FY25?

23 JENNIFER DECARLI: So, we don't have the number  
24 right now because we're collecting the data but we're  
25 anticipating it will be what it was before when we

1  
2 launched the COVID emergency program, where it was  
3 approximately \$1,200 per survivor and that's the  
4 average we're expecting again, but we haven't put a  
5 cap on requests.

6 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: How long does it take for  
7 survivors to receive the microgrant from the moment  
8 they apply?

9 JENNIFER DECARLI: So, the goal of the program is  
10 to be as expeditious as possible with processing the  
11 applications. And so, we are encouraging our  
12 providers to get that grant out quickly. And again,  
13 we'll be able to report that actual timeline by the  
14 end of the year to the Council.

15 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: If you had to give like an  
16 example of a timeline, what would that look like?

17 JENNIFER DECARLI: So, right now, the requests  
18 coming in are often for rent arrears, because the  
19 goal of the program right is to keep people stably  
20 housed either in their existing housing or to help  
21 them move or relocate. So, I know for example, from  
22 a client we've worked with at the Family Justice  
23 Center recently, they applied to the program for  
24 relocation support and they were able to get that  
25 grant turned around within a week. I think it really

1  
2 depends on the situation and the request by the  
3 client.

4 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: So, possibly a week or so?

5 JENNIFER DECARLI: Yeah, I mean again, I think  
6 it's going to depend on the request but we're  
7 encouraging as expeditiously as possible.

8 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you for that.  
9 Currently, how many clients are enrolled in this  
10 program and how does that compare to historical  
11 enrollment levels over the past several years?

12 JENNIFER DECARLI: So again, I wish I had more  
13 numbers to share but we just officially launched it  
14 in July. We are collecting that data and will have  
15 that report to you. We are hoping that its  
16 comparable. In our emergency program, we were able  
17 to get a grant out to 377 survivors. That was a  
18 program that we stood up really quickly during COVID.  
19 The average current amount was \$1,243 and we  
20 disbursed almost \$470,000 in a few months.

21 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Alright, if funding was not  
22 limited and the agency was able to support the full  
23 level of demand for the microgrant, how much would it  
24 cost and how many clients would it serve?

3 JENNIFER DECARLI: That's a really big question.  
4 I think that's what we're hoping to figure out with  
5 this program. We are really looking forward to  
6 continuing these conversations. We're thrilled to  
7 have this program. And because it just launched in  
8 July, we just don't have those answers just yet but  
9 we hope to.

10 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: I think my frustration and  
11 it's not you.

12 JENNIFER DECARLI: No, I understand.

13 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Just in general, we had a  
14 hearing earlier this year asking the same questions  
15 and the frustration is that we don't have that  
16 information in advance, so it would be great if we  
17 could work with the agency to make sure that every  
18 time you come to a hearing, we have like some  
19 information to give. But I understand that you're  
20 still in the process.

21 JENNIFER DECARLI: Well I can share, if it's  
22 helpful, but it's not - because I haven't shared it  
23 yet it's not going exactly to your question. The  
24 microgrants were as you know, added on to our  
25 Existing Home Plus programs and they provide three  
services. The lock change services, the personal

1  
2 alarm system services, and the microgrant services,  
3 and they were able to get me the personal alarm  
4 numbers for this year. So, for FY24, we served 1,417  
5 clients with personal alarm systems. They call them  
6 PURs and in FY25, so since July 1 of 2024, we've  
7 served 691 clients with personal alarm systems. So,  
8 I apologize that we don't have the other numbers but  
9 we are at least able to share that and that's because  
10 the flexible funding part just got added on on July  
11 1<sup>st</sup>, so we're still kind of getting that initial  
12 quarter of numbers.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Alright, I'm going to get  
14 back to you on the alarms because I see the  
15 difference in the amount per fiscal year. I'm going  
16 to shift a little bit to Family Justice Centers.

17 JENNIFER DECARLI: Sure.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Earlier, you all shared with  
19 Deputy Speaker about homebase and the FHEPS access at  
20 Family Justice Centers, so I wanted to know what  
21 other housing resources are provided to domestic  
22 violence survivors at Family Justice Centers.

23 JENNIFER DECARLI: Thank you. That's a great  
24 question. We spend a tremendous amount of time  
25 working with our community of providers to providers,

1 many housing options as possible to survivors. As  
2 you mentioned, we have the FHEPS B program, but  
3 that's only available for survivors with children who  
4 are on public assistance and have children under the  
5 age of 18. We also work really closely with New  
6 Destiny and our community of rapid rehousing  
7 providers. We have a HUD funded DV Planning Grant  
8 that is, the goal of that grant is to incorporate the  
9 needs of DV survivors into the city's coordinated  
10 entry system. And to do that, we've greatly expanded  
11 our Rapid Rehousing program and so we're able to  
12 support survivors in applying for those programs. I  
13 wish they were as rapid as the name makes it sound  
14 but we'd like to say they're rapid for New York City.  
15 It's a lot of like support applying for different  
16 vouchers that might be available to survivors as well  
17 as getting the emergency financial assistance for two  
18 years through these programs.

19  
20 We've grown those programs from very small  
21 numbers to almost ten programs in the city now so  
22 that's been a huge part of our work through this HUD  
23 coordinated entry grant. And then we also work with  
24 our partners at NYCHA and HPD to support voucher  
25 programs. I know we've spoken here before about the

1  
2 Emergency Housing Voucher program. We did that and  
3 we stood it up really quickly with city partners. We  
4 were thrilled to get vouchers allocated for survivors  
5 not in shelter. So to avoid shelter, which is  
6 obviously what we wanted to do as much as possible  
7 and keep people safe and we were able to actually  
8 lease up over 1,200 survivors with those emergency  
9 housing vouchers. So, that program just came to an  
10 end and we hope to build on that success and have  
11 more targeted vouchers for survivors.

12 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you for that. How many  
13 HR liaisons are available at FJCs?

14 JENNIFER DECARLI: So, right now, we have an HRA  
15 liaison that cycles around the five centers.

16 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: How many liaison's?

17 JENNIFER DECARLI: We have one HRA liaison that  
18 covers one day a week at each of our FJCs. But I  
19 would say, we actually are able to she's really our  
20 access point person but then she liaisons with  
21 colleagues at our backs, you know the job centers.  
22 These three job centers are not at our backs and  
23 other colleagues, so that we can network and leverage  
24 and have troubleshooting happen.

25 RIMA RIVERA: And if I may?

3 JENNIFER DECARLI: Yeah.

4 RIMA RIVERA: Yeah, it's also great to emphasize  
5 that HRA also oversees nonresidential services, which  
6 our community providers that provide services to  
7 survivors who aren't in shelter but in the community.  
8 And they rotate into family justice centers and they  
9 serve time there addressing the needs of any domestic  
10 violence survivor in the community who come to the  
11 family justice center looking for help.

12 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: But you have a one liaison?

13 RIMA RIVERA: No, we have one liaison that is  
14 currently at the FJC but we also have a presence of  
15 DV nonresidential providers that rotate and spend  
16 time in the various FJC's throughout the five  
17 boroughs. And we also have liaisons at the back  
18 centers.

19 So, we have domestic violence liaisons in every  
20 back center of benefit access center that provides  
21 counseling and assists with temporary waivers for  
22 domestic violence clients who need an exemption or  
23 waiver from PA requirements and referrals -  
24 information and referrals to the community based  
25 assistance. So, we do have a presence in the back



1  
2 centers and our non-residential providers have a  
3 presence at the FJC's.

4 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: I wonder how long does it  
5 take for that liaison to process the waivers?

6 RIMA RIVERA: So, the liaison at the FJC doesn't  
7 process waivers.

8 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay.

9 RIMA RIVERA: We have social workers at Benefit  
10 Access Centers that process waivers for our clients  
11 who need an exemption or a waiver from meeting the  
12 requirements for PA because doing so might put them  
13 at risk.

14 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay.

15 RIMA RIVERA: Actually I have the number of DVL  
16 waivers that were processed and -

17 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you.

18 RIMA RIVERA: That I'd like to give if I could  
19 find it.

20 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: While you look for that  
21 information, I just have a quick question regarding  
22 family justice centers and housing as you shared  
23 earlier. I wanted to know what does the check in  
24 look like for clients once they are processed and  
25 they get into housing. Does your agency check in

3 with them to make sure that they're stable and they  
4 are able to continue to remain in place?

5 JENNIFER DECARLI: Yeah so that's a great  
6 question, so when you come into a family justice  
7 center in our screen for support and services, you're  
8 assigned to a case manager from one of our either  
9 city contracted or community network of partners.  
10 That case manager holds your case and helps you with  
11 the housing application process and then continues to  
12 follow up with you afterwards to make sure you're  
13 stably housed. So, we really, uhm, so for example,  
14 if Safe Horizon has case managers, they're holding  
15 those clients and providing that support. Same with  
16 Arab American Family Support Center. You know it  
17 depends on the actual CBO providing that support, but  
18 the goal is to do that and to ensure that they're  
19 safe and stably housed.

20 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay, did you find that stat?

21 RIMA RIVERA: Yes, I did. So, in calendar year  
22 2023, we saw 9,368 clients and we processed 6,643  
23 waivers. And also just to clarify, uhm, we contract  
24 with 9 not for profit social service providers to  
25 provide domestic violence services to persons in the  
community.

3 That's what I - when I was referring to the - our  
4 non-res providers. We contract with 9 providers and  
5 they provide core services such as advocacy,  
6 counseling, information and referral, and they sit at  
7 the family justice center.

8 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: And the stat you just gave us  
9 was for FY23?

10 RIMA RIVERA: The statistic I gave you was for  
11 calendar year 2023.

12 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay, last question on Local  
13 Law 45. Earlier this year, Council passed Local Law  
14 45 of 2024 establishing a program to assist with door  
15 and window repair and security for survivors of  
16 domestic violence and gender based violence. And we  
17 know that these types of services can help keep  
18 survivors in their homes and avoid entering the  
19 shelter system for lack of safe housing. How many  
20 individuals have benefited from this program within  
21 the calendar year? I know you mentioned a number  
22 earlier but if you could restate that and can you  
23 confirm that door and window repair services have  
24 been - how many have been provided with that?

25 JENNIFER DECARLI: So, it's a great question and  
it's such an important service. So, window and lock

1  
2 changes are part of the services you can get through  
3 Home Plus, which was codified by 45. So, the number  
4 I gave you previously was for the personal emergency  
5 response system.

6 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: That's the 1,417?

7 JENNIFER DECARLI: Yup the 1,417 for FY24 and  
8 then 691 thus far for FY25.

9 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay.

10 JENNIFER DECARLI: Those are the alarm systems  
11 and the lock changes numbers we're hoping to have to  
12 you and I know I'm sorry because I know that's going  
13 to frustrate you but that's part of the data we're  
14 collecting from the providers. Those lock changes  
15 are up and going with the home plus providers and  
16 they're able to provide those to clients.

17 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Alright, thank you. I'm  
18 going to kick it back to Deputy Speaker Ayala.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Are there any -  
20 oh, I want to - Council Member Avilés has joined us.  
21 Council Member Gutiérrez, do you have questions?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Chairs. I  
23 have some written down here. Okay and I don't know  
24 if you've covered this already but if you did I  
25 apologize. Uhm, can you provide information on the

1  
2 average wait time for families seeking emergency  
3 shelter? I can't hear you I'm sorry. Oh, your mic  
4 is off.

5 RIMA RIVERA: Oh, that will help. I'm sorry  
6 Council Member Gutiérrez, your question was the  
7 amount of time it takes for a?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: To be placed into an  
9 emergency shelter.

10 RIMA RIVERA: It depends on whether the person is  
11 able to find accommodations at the time that they're  
12 linked to shelter. So, as mentioned before, there  
13 are three avenues to access DV shelter. They call  
14 the hotline and they are linked to a provider and  
15 again, let me, I need to stress that uh, HRA has no  
16 influence over where the clients are placed or not  
17 placed in DV shelter. This is a discussion that a  
18 domestic violence survivor has directly with the  
19 provider to see if the accommodations are suitable  
20 for them. And so, it depends really on whether they  
21 can find the right accommodations at the time they're  
22 linked.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And specific  
24 accommodations, what are some of those accommodations  
25 that you can make for someone? Like what is the

1  
2 range of whether they have children or like what are  
3 some of those accommodations that folks ask for?

4 RIMA RIVERA: So, depending on their family  
5 configuration, whether the rooms they have available  
6 meet their needs. And again, I want to stress that  
7 it's shared living. So, when they have that  
8 conversation with the provider, they are told that  
9 this is a situation where you're going to be sharing  
10 a unit with another family.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And every emergency  
12 shelter is this way?

13 RIMA RIVERA: Emergency shelters, yes, most  
14 emergency shelters. And uh, family configuration and  
15 of course whether it's a safe placement for them.  
16 So, they're limited based on what area is safe for  
17 them. I mean depending on whether the person who  
18 caused harm lives in a certain area. Whether that  
19 person who caused harm has family members who may  
20 live in another borough or another neighborhood that  
21 might cause harm or might let them know where their  
22 location is. So, it's a nuanced process and it could  
23 be quite challenging for a survivor to find  
24 appropriate housing and the last thing that we want  
25 of course is to have a survivor enter a DV emergency

3 shelter and have to leave because they feel like this  
4 is an unsafe or an unsafe accommodation, an  
5 accommodation that doesn't meet their needs.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Are there ever  
7 incidences where considerations are made regarding a  
8 child's school district or you know existing child  
9 care provider?

10 So, the McKinney Rental Act, the parent is able  
11 to either decide to keep their child at the school,  
12 their originated school or transfer that school to  
13 where the shelter is, near to where the shelter is.

14 If they need busing services, busing services  
15 will be arranged for them. They also have if they  
16 wish, they can let the DOE know that - of their  
17 situation, of their DV situation so that the line of  
18 communication could be had between DOE and the  
19 client.

20 So, they either had the ability to keep their  
21 child at the school there in or transfer that child  
22 to a closer school near the shelter.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. And then  
24 from HRAs perspective, how are you - how is the  
25 agency able to ensure that the CBO is providing these  
services, have enough funding, have all the support,

3 how often is that reviewed? That check in? I know  
4 Deputy Speaker Ayala in one of her initial questions  
5 asked you know, the amount of folks needing  
6 assistance and housing is pretty stable despite how  
7 they're entering the city's system and how you're  
8 monitoring but how can you - what can you share about  
9 ensuring that?

10 JOHN ROJAS: Sure, uhm, I would say that's a  
11 joint process because although the Administration  
12 contracts the provider, the actual oversight of both  
13 the Tier II and the Emergency Shelters are by state  
14 agencies. So, OTDA oversees our Tier II's and OCFS  
15 oversees our emergency shelter. So, we work  
16 collaboratively with OTDA and OCFS respectively but  
17 ultimately oversight is from these two state  
18 agencies. So, everything from monitoring the  
19 services to incidents. So, if an incident occurs, we  
20 may be made aware but the official process to report  
21 an incident has to go through the state process.

22 So, it's a joint collaboration I would say but  
23 ultimately our state partners are the ones who have  
24 the oversight including the licensure. So, to your  
25 question, you know, we want to make sure that the  
rooms are safe, habitable, and meet standards and



1 requirements for shelter. And those licensures and  
2 those certifications are provided by the state, by  
3 each respective agency.  
4

5 RIMA RIVERA: But I do want to add that we work -  
6 hmm, we have time. We work closely with OCFS and our  
7 providers. We kind of act as a bridge between  
8 providers and OCFS and we meet regularly with our  
9 providers to make sure that they understand the  
10 regulations. Are there any barriers to service?  
11 Clarify any regulations that they may have questions  
12 on?

13 So, although the state does have oversight and  
14 they're responsible for compliance, we work very  
15 closely with OCFS and providers to make sure their  
16 services are provided in an efficient manner.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Okay,  
18 sorry I have a couple more questions. Thank you  
19 Chairs. My next question is related to clients with  
20 disabilities. You can give me all the information;  
21 I'm brand new to this but does the Administration  
22 have any plan to increase accessibility of DV  
23 survivors or of domestic shelters for clients with  
24 disabilities or what does that - what does that look  
25 like now?

3 RIMA RIVERA: So, I do have information on a  
4 number of ADA units and booms that we have available.  
5 If you could just bear with me.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah no of course,  
7 thank you. And then while you're looking for that,  
8 I'll squeeze in another question, which is if a  
9 client has a disability or a need that can't be met  
10 at a shelter, what happens and is there a process  
11 that you all have for accommodating that client?

12 RIMA RIVERA: Sure thank you. It's a good  
13 question. So, currently we have 106 ADA compliant  
14 beds, which is five percent of our emergency shelter  
15 portfolio.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And is that  
17 distributed borough to borough or?

18 RIMA RIVERA: So, we have one shelter in  
19 particular that provides assistance to those who are  
20 disabled.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay and is there an  
22 intention to expand or do you find that there's a  
23 greater, a growing need?

24 RIMA RIVERA: We would always look to - as we -  
25 as you mentioned earlier, we are preparing or

1  
2 planning to release a solicitation to be replace 94  
3 beds. And we will be giving more consideration to -

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: The LGBT-

5 RIMA RIVERA: More facilities that are able to  
6 provide ADA compliant rooms and beds.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, hmm, hmm. Okay,  
8 thank you so much. I appreciate it.

9 RIMA RIVERA: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Anyone else have questions?  
11 Council Member Avilés.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you so much Chair.  
13 I was curious uhm about the number of beds you have  
14 that are culturally competent for Muslim women and  
15 children. There's a real need and I represent  
16 District 38, which includes Sunset Park, but between  
17 Sunset Park and Bay Ridge, the real dearth of beds  
18 available for DV survivors from Muslim families. Do  
19 you have - how many culturally competent?

20 RIMA RIVERA: Our shelters are available.  
21 Residential services - residential shelters are  
22 available to all. So, when someone seeks shelter,  
23 the state regs prevents a provider to discriminate  
24 based on race or ethnicity or religion. So, each  
25 shelter is open to all.

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2 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY 60

3 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I guess a better way to -  
4 a better way maybe to ask is I obviously know you  
5 don't discriminate but do you have shelter providers  
6 that are culturally competent? Right and that means  
7 do they have accessibility to prayer spaces? Is the  
8 food Halal? Are there other elements that would be  
9 necessary for obviously or would be dignified for a  
10 Muslim family that needs shelter in that  
11 circumstance?

12 RIMA RIVERA: We definitely recognize a need to  
13 ensure that our providers provide services in a way  
14 that's culturally sensitive and competent. So, the  
15 state and we encourage it as well, ensures that -  
16 encourages and ensures actually that there's certain  
17 training, trainings are provided to aid to provider  
18 staff to ensure that services are delivered in a  
19 culturally sensitive way. And they are to provide  
20 these plans, these training plans to the state.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Do you have any data  
22 around this population in particular that you've been  
23 tracking or following? Because what I understand is  
24 there are no beds and uh folks in community like many  
25 communities right are struggling to support you know  
their community members but with all the

1 complications of being in the same place where the  
2 violence is occurring and all those other  
3 complications. So, I'd love to know how the city is  
4 approaching this particular need? Are there specific  
5 providers? Are we meeting the demands? Are you  
6 seeing the demands?  
7

8 JENNIFER DECARLI: So, it's a great question  
9 Council Member. At the Family Justice Centers, we  
10 have a really strong partnership with two  
11 organizations in particular that work with our Arabic  
12 speaking survivors, Arabic and Family Support Center  
13 and Pillars of Peace and they two - we have a number  
14 of cultural specific orgs working alongside of the  
15 FJCs. They too have raised these concerns to us and  
16 its being reassured, we're constantly doing  
17 culturally specific and culturally competent  
18 trainings for providers and we also are really trying  
19 to build up the housing options. I mentioned to  
20 Chair Louis to avoid shelter, so the Emergency  
21 Housing Voucher program for example that I mentioned,  
22 the Arabic and Family Support Center did hundreds of  
23 applications for survivors, which is a voucher that  
24 then will allow you to leave the home and lease up  
25 the home. And we were able to run that successfully

1  
2 with housing assistance through New Destiny and have  
3 people stably housed. I would say that's how we've  
4 been approaching it at the center is really to  
5 provide that case management support and the housing  
6 options and support so that we can avoid shelter.  
7 And then obviously working with our provider  
8 community to ensure culturally competent and  
9 culturally specific training and partnerships with  
10 organizations.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: That's very helpful. If  
12 you could provide any concrete data around exactly  
13 what is being done and how it's meeting the need or  
14 on the way to meet the need, because there's still  
15 very much a disconnect that I'm - It's unclear how to  
16 reconcile those things because emergency beds are so  
17 difficult to find particularly with this community  
18 for a range of reasons.

19 So, yeah, I'd love to see more concrete data and  
20 what funding is being made available to make sure  
21 that we are on our way to trying to address as much  
22 as possible.

23 JENNIFER DECARLI: Sure, I'd be happy to follow up  
24 with you.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Council Member. I  
4 have a couple of questions. Let me just move this  
5 up. The sound in this room is a little bit funky, so  
6 I apologize for that.

7 Can you tell us, the clients who time out of DV  
8 shelter get to go directly from DV shelter to the DHS  
9 system, shelter system or do they have to return to  
10 PATH?

11 RIMA RIVERA: So, clients that timeout?

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah.

13 RIMA RIVERA: Reach their maximum length of stay.  
14 We work - as they approach their maximum length of  
15 stay, the providers usually have a discussion with  
16 the client and there is opportunity to either assist  
17 with placement in the Tier II, family Tier II  
18 facility or a safe placement at DHS. If there's no  
19 other alternative for the client.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, wait -

21 RIMA RIVERA: So, and as I think we mentioned  
22 before, we are using our streamlining activities so  
23 that we can uhm safely place clients - have them  
24 transition from our DV shelter system to DHS in a way  
25 where they can bypass the intake process and go  
26 directly to a DHS Tier II facility.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay and that presumes how  
4 quick, how soon? How soon does it resume, the  
5 streamlining process?

6 RIMA RIVERA: We're hoping that it may resume by  
7 uhm before the end of calendar year 2024.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

9 JOHN ROJAS: And Deputy Speaker, I would also add  
10 that one of the collaborations we work on with DHS is  
11 ensuring when a family or an individual transfers  
12 from a DV shelter over to DHS, their eligibility for  
13 a rental assistance voucher, housing and shopping  
14 letter goes with them.

15 So, if they were deemed eligible when they get to  
16 DHS, DHS will generate a new shopping letter for  
17 them. So, there is no need to do the entire  
18 reapplication process for them. So, that's another  
19 mechanism for us to you know streamline the process a  
20 little and make it less onerous for the transfer  
21 between DV shelters and DHS shelters.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, and can you tell us how  
23 is the Administration serving new arrivals who  
24 experience domestic violence?  
25



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3 JENNIFER DECARLI: And do you mind just - I think  
4 I heard you. I'm having trouble hearing everyone. I  
5 don't know if my hearing is bad today. I apologize.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I know, we're all - yeah.  
7 We're all struggling in this room today.

8 JENNIFER DECARLI: We're all muffled, okay.  
9 Okay, I think you said how is the Administration  
10 supporting survivors of domestic violence who are -

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: New arrivals, yeah.

12 JENNIFER DECARLI: New arrivals, yes, okay. So,  
13 I've actually at NGBV been working really closely  
14 with the operating agencies, operating the HERCs and  
15 the shelters with my Deputy Mayor's Office to provide  
16 best practices. So, we've created a best practices  
17 document that we've distributed to all those sites  
18 and we've done trainings for hundreds of workers at  
19 the HERCs and the shelters, and we're continuing  
20 those conversations and now going to do a new kind of  
21 series with DHS to ensure that folks know about the  
22 HRA nonresidential programs, know about the family  
23 justice centers. We are seeing folks come into our  
24 family justice centers from those sites because of  
25 those trainings and we just are going to continue to  
do that and ensure that there's competency and

1  
2 understanding. And really addressing the specific  
3 needs that our new arrival clients are coming with,  
4 which is immigration consultations, right. We have  
5 immigration lawyers at our family justice centers and  
6 we're able to connect them to those consultations.  
7 We're able to explore working with our colleagues at  
8 HRA transfers into the DV shelter system. If the  
9 survivor wants to do that. So many folks are just  
10 not aware right of the options and so, we're working  
11 really hard to make sure that that knowledge is out  
12 there and those linkages are happening.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: How does the time limit policy  
14 interfere with the way that we're processing those  
15 applicants?

16 JENNIFER DECARLI: I'm going to defer to Rima to  
17 talk about it but we have had some direct connections  
18 into the DV shelter system, so I'll let Rima speak  
19 more about that.

20 RIMA RIVERA: Thank you Jennifer. So, you're  
21 talking - we're focusing on referrals from the FJCs  
22 to the DV shelters for migrants, yes. So, access  
23 again to our DV system. Really there's three avenues  
24 and one of them is for migrants who are seeking  
25 shelter into our DV system would be making that

1 connection through the Safe Horizon hotline. So, we  
2 have been speaking to make sure - we've been making  
3 sure that that messaging has been going out right.  
4 So, we want to make sure that migrants who are at  
5 risk of domestic violence, they are aware of - that  
6 they have the ability to find accommodations in our  
7 DV shelter system. So, we make sure that they have  
8 information for our nonresidential providers that are  
9 in the community, should they not want to transfer or  
10 leave DHS or leave the community to go into a DV  
11 shelter. So, yeah, so we've been working on just  
12 making sure that that information is out there.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, that information is being  
15 shared at the HERCs?

16 RIMA RIVERA: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, so if a person is in a  
18 HERC, especially you know now that we have these 30,  
19 60 day limits on time at these facilities and an  
20 individual wants to - you know that's in a HERC,  
21 qualifies and wants to transfer to DHS DV emergency  
22 site. Are they also restricted by the 30 and 60 day  
23 rule? How does that impact their stay?

24 JENNIFER DECARLI: So, in our best practices  
25 document that we've developed and we've given to the

1  
2 HERCs, it says specifically that if there is a new  
3 arrival, a migrant in a DHS run facility and they are  
4 experiencing domestic violence, they can be offered a  
5 linkage to the hotline and I've emailed Rima late at  
6 night trying to get folks in because we want to make  
7 sure that people understand that's a different system  
8 and that system is available for migrants and we've  
9 been able to connect people. I think it was just  
10 getting messaging out at the HERCs about that and  
11 making sure that people understood that that  
12 connection could be made.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Perfect, thank you.

14 JOHN ROJAS: And Deputy Speaker, just want to  
15 clarify. I think if I heard you correctly, there is  
16 no difference in limitations for new arrivals from  
17 any other individuals seeking our services. So,  
18 there's no additional time limits placed on it, so  
19 they would be eligible for the 90-days and the 245  
20 day extension if granted by the provider for the  
21 emergency shelter.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, perfect, thank you. In  
23 2018, Local Law 83 was enacted amending Section 21-  
24 1411 of the Administrative Code of the City of New  
25 York. In relation to exits from domestic violence

1  
2 emergency shelters, Local Law 83 requires New York  
3 City's Department of Social Services and Human  
4 Services Administration to submit an annual report to  
5 the Council Speaker, as well as to post the report on  
6 its website, on or before March 1<sup>st</sup>, annually. Does  
7 the agency make these reports available anywhere  
8 other than the reports legal notices and rules page  
9 of the Departments website?

10 RIMA RIVERA: I believe that's the only place  
11 where they're made available.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's the only place where  
13 they would be available?

14 RIMA RIVERA: I believe so but I can check and  
15 get back to you.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you know why the report  
17 has not been visible on HRAs website since 2021?

18 RIMA RIVERA: I will check and find out and get  
19 back to you.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay and I would also want to  
21 know why did the 2022 and 2023 report not include  
22 data on EHV's?

23 JOHN ROJAS: We could get back you on that.  
24 We're - similarly to our colleagues at End GBV, we're  
25 very happy to report that HRA received 500 vouchers

1  
2 of emergency housing vouchers specifically for  
3 survivors of domestic violence and today they believe  
4 that 496 were placed in permanent housing. So, we're  
5 very happy, we're more than happy to include that.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: You brag about it.

7 JOHN ROJAS: Yeah, we should brag about it and  
8 we're very happy about that success story.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's how you brag. You put  
10 it out there. So, you know, regarding to these  
11 Preconsidered Intro., which would amend the reporting  
12 requirements to increase this frequency from annually  
13 to monthly, as well as add reporting on domestic  
14 violence Tier II shelters, does the Administration  
15 support these changes?

16 RIMA RIVERA: In regards to Intro. 2572 and to  
17 2573, we agree with the intent to provide data and  
18 would like to continue a discussion with Council  
19 beyond this hearing with a view to amending the  
20 perimeter of this proposed legislation in the manner  
21 that best aligns with our ongoing obligations to  
22 uphold clients privacy and our capacity to produce  
23 this information. Our capability to report in a  
24 timely manner and our ability to ensure the accuracy

1  
2 of data to truly reflect the metrics and given report  
3 it aims to capture.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, regarding Local Law 79,  
5 how many domestic violence survivors applied for HRA  
6 DV shelter in August of 2024?

7 RIMA RIVERA: So, unlike DHS, clients seeking  
8 shelter - this is a request for the number of  
9 applications that were reported in August of 2024.  
10 Unlike DHS clients, clients seeking shelter and to be  
11 directly with DV emergency providers, they are  
12 provided with several opportunities to speak with  
13 several shelters and have that discussion to see if  
14 the placement is appropriate for them.

15 A provider may accept a client. It may not  
16 accept a client. The client may accept placement,  
17 may not accept placements. Again, clients are given  
18 multiple opportunities to have that discussion with  
19 different providers. Therefore it's kind of complex,  
20 very complex to accurately report this data. The  
21 process of applying for a DV shelter is not a  
22 straight forward one time application. There are  
23 several attempts assigned to a referral for a  
24 shelter. Our data team is unable to evaluate the  
25 linkage attempt in the way that would enable us to

1  
2 assign them to a single client at this time but we  
3 are looking to see how we can provide this data to  
4 you in the near future.

5 What we can do is report that they were in  
6 August, 212 households admitted into shelter in  
7 August of 2024 and there were 34 singles that were  
8 admitted in that month of August of 2024.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Can you share that singles  
10 number again?

11 RIMA RIVERA: Sure, 34.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: 34 singles. Did you have a  
13 follow up question? Do you have a question? Oh,  
14 okay. I felt her looking at me. Uhm, so you know  
15 understanding that you may not have all of the data,  
16 could you also include in the report back, how many  
17 single adults applied for HRA DV shelter in August  
18 and how many single survivors were able to answer HRA  
19 DV shelter in August? And how many single survivors  
20 were not able to answer the shelter, HRA DV shelter  
21 in August?

22 RIMA RIVERA: Right, so we are looking to the  
23 overall data team to see if we can produce that data  
24 for you.



3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, perfect. I think I had  
4 one more question regarding Project Home pilot. So,  
5 in April 2022, Mayor Adams announced Project Home  
6 pilot and partnership with New Destiny Housing that  
7 would provide intensive specialized housing  
8 assistance to domestic violence survivors with  
9 children living in the city.

10 Six months on, what is the status of the  
11 implementation of this pilot and are there any  
12 outcomes that can be reported at this time?

13 AQUEELA WINSTON: We recognize that domestic  
14 violence is a primary driver for homelessness in New  
15 York City and we also recognize the need to provide  
16 safe housing for individuals who are experiencing  
17 domestic violence so that they can begin their  
18 healing journey and reintegrate back into the  
19 community. And so, to that end, we did partner with  
20 New Destiny on the Project Home Pilot, which is  
21 intended to serve 100 families who are experiencing  
22 domestic violence. Who have experienced domestic  
23 violence and who qualify for City FHEPS. We have  
24 both a treatment group and a controlled group. The  
25 control is to provide specialized housing assistance,  
housing search assistance as well as after care

1  
2 services to these 100 families to determine if these  
3 interventions result in better long term outcomes for  
4 them.

5 And so, this referral process began in March of  
6 this year. We currently have an MOU through 2026,  
7 which also includes an evaluation period. So we  
8 don't have any data to share now but we do anticipate  
9 being able to share better within a year or by 2026,  
10 which ever comes first.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Would it be too soon to  
12 determine what the cost of the program would be if it  
13 expanded beyond a pilot?

14 AQUEELA WINSTON: I don't have that data now but  
15 we can look into it and get back to you.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, do you know if the new  
17 pilot programs funding is within HRAs budget?

18 AQUEELA WINSTON: I'm sorry, can you repeat the  
19 question?

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: ; Is the new pilot program  
21 funding within HRAs budget? And if it is, under  
22 which unit of appropriation and which budget codes?

23 JENNIFER DECARLI: I'm sorry, we can confirm this  
24 but I believe it was private funded. And so I think  
25 that's why they're doing the research study as a

1  
2 pilot to see where it goes. I would say it really  
3 builds on the success we all saw through the EHV  
4 process of giving that dedicated housing search  
5 support, which is why we both feel you're so  
6 successful in helping survivors be placed into  
7 housing.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, perfect. I have no  
9 further questions. Council Member Louis? No,  
10 alright. Thank you all so much for coming to  
11 testify.

12 I now open the hearing for public testimony. I  
13 remind members of the public that this is a  
14 government proceeding and that decorum shall be  
15 observed at all times. As such, members of the  
16 public - shhhh- shall remain silent at all times.  
17 The witness table is reserved for people who wish to  
18 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 recording  
21 as testimony but may submit transcripts as such  
22 recordings to the Sergeant of Arms for inclusion in  
23 the hearing record. If you wish to speak at today's  
24 hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the  
25 Sergeant of Arms and wait to be recognized. When

1  
2 recognized, you will have two minutes to speak on  
3 today's hearing topic, Domestic Violence and  
4 Homelessness. If you have a written statement or  
5 additional written testimony that you wish to submit  
6 for the record, please provide a copy of that  
7 testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. You may also  
8 email written testimony to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov)  
9 within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video  
10 recordings will not be accepted. We will now call  
11 the first panel, Stephanie Mansfield, Krystal  
12 Murrell, Daniris Espinal, and Stephanie Woodbine.

13 Make sure to put the mic up close because we're  
14 having issues hearing and the red light has to be on  
15 in order for us to be able to hear you and any one of  
16 you can begin. Do you want to start from this side?  
17 You can begin, yeah, just make sure your mic is on  
18 and put a little closer to you. Thank you.

19 STEPHANIE MANSFIELD: Hello, hi. My name is  
20 Stephanie, do you hear me now? Stephanie Mansfield.  
21 I am grateful to be able to be here and to speak with  
22 you and just to give my perspective. I am 36 years  
23 old. I am a Haitian American immigrant descendent I  
24 should say. I am a single mother of three beautiful  
25 children. Their father was my abuser, so in 2015,

1  
2 2013, I was uh living with their father. The room,  
3 the apartment that we were living in was under his  
4 name. The lease title was under his name and uhm,  
5 this is where my story begins.

6 According to HRA DSS's website, uhm they state  
7 how I'm sorry, domestic violence can include physical  
8 violence, forceable sex, threatening to hurt you or  
9 your children, constant insulting, stalking,  
10 obsessively checking up or otherwise trying to  
11 control your otherwise trying to control your  
12 behavior. I was unaware that I was in an abusive  
13 relationship. By the time I was aware, I was  
14 sexually assaulted by my abuser. I had my third son  
15 and it took eight years of living in a home which I  
16 didn't feel like was my home. My abuser had access  
17 to my apartment. He was able to come in and out and  
18 in the end, according to the US Department of Housing  
19 and Urban Development, I was homeless. They have  
20 four stables of defining what homelessness is.  
21 Literally homeless imminent risk of homelessness,  
22 homelessness under federal stature, and fleeing or  
23 attempting to flee DV.

24 Eight years of the ten years I lived in that  
25 apartment; I was attempting to flee my abuser. I am

1  
2 a proud mama of a neurodivergent son. I am a proud  
3 mama of a son that has ADHD that's on the spectrum.  
4 I am myself, physically disabled. I suffer TVI and  
5 these are all barriers that prevented me from fleeing  
6 my abuser. Not - trying to be the best mom that I  
7 could be, prevented me from fleeing my abuser. The  
8 people that I encountered along the way prevented me  
9 from fleeing my abuser. There is multiple context of  
10 police officers or HRA workers or all of these  
11 agencies and organizations that were meant to uplift  
12 me as a survivor and yet, I was not supported.

13 Last year, because of the EHV voucher; I'm an EHV  
14 voucher holder. This will be - the 10<sup>th</sup> will be one  
15 year that I am in my home that I feel safe in, one  
16 year. And last year, the incongruency where it's  
17 like, everyone has their own definition of what  
18 domestic violence is and everyone has their own idea  
19 of what domestic violence is. And in the end, it  
20 made me and my children suffer. Housing is so  
21 important and so vital. I need to feel safe where  
22 I'm going. I need to feel that my children will be  
23 safe and they will heard. That their tantrums is not  
24 tantrums, it's just learning disabilities. It's  
25 inputting the world differently. I did not feel

1 safe. I was not safe until I moved. It is so  
2 important that the ACS workers - I had three ACS  
3 cases, I had three uhm, I had three ACS cases against  
4 my abuser. In all of those uhm in all of those  
5 encounters with so many people that could help, I  
6 still wasn't able to access the services that I  
7 needed. My programs are important. The ability to  
8 move and know that I'm going to be safe, that my  
9 children are going to be safe and that we are not  
10 going to end up homeless again. The eviction notice,  
11 the eviction process, having the proper supports and  
12 people who are trauma informed to help and aid. New  
13 Destiny Housing made an article in 2024 July. A  
14 crisis compounded on homelessness, DV and DV  
15 survivors. They outlined concrete steps that can  
16 change how we view homelessness, how we view domestic  
17 violence, and how to best support children that are  
18 according to New York State disabled. Children that  
19 are undergoing the disability process, the IEPs and  
20 the neuropsych evaluations. How do we speak up and  
21 stand out for those individuals? As a youth, I went  
22 into the shelter. I was with my mom. She was a  
23 domestic violence survivor. It was a one off  
24 incident and it was her determination to get us out  
25

3 of there that allowed us to be that one percent, that  
4 was equal to leave the domestic violence shelter.

5 So, for me as a mother of three and to place them  
6 in a situation where I knew routines are not a thing.  
7 That routines will not be able to be upheld, I put  
8 myself in risk in order to keep my children's sanity.  
9 And in the end, three ACS cases means that they were  
10 not safe. It means that they were harmed because of  
11 my decisions but if I don't feel supported, how can I  
12 move forward?

13 The two asks that I would like to emphasize is  
14 the improvement of data collection and reporting.  
15 How can you know what's going on with survivors if  
16 you don't have the adequate data to support it? Data  
17 allows change to happen. Data allows things to  
18 reveal itself. The second - sorry - the second is  
19 recognizing the whole survivor, recognizing the  
20 things, the complexities that come with every single  
21 survivor and the differences that make us beautiful.  
22 The differences that makes it more complex. The  
23 access, the ability to uhm - the ability to see us.  
24 I will always prioritize my children before myself  
25 and it led to my detriment. I was in the hospital a  
month after I was placed in new housing. I was not



1  
2 given access to the McKinney Vita I think it is,  
3 where you get busing for your child when you're a  
4 survivor. I wasn't given that and I spent  
5 Thanksgiving in the hospital instead of celebrating  
6 it with my children but that's my disability and if  
7 there were services, if there were enough services to  
8 provide me what I needed and my family and what they  
9 needed, I believe things would be different. I am so  
10 grateful of where I am now and where I am today  
11 compared to where I was a year ago. And I would like  
12 to thank you for your time.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

14 KRYSTAL MURRELL: Good morning. My name is  
15 Krystal Murrell and as of August 7<sup>th</sup> of 2024, I have  
16 finally and legally defeated domestic violence. As  
17 you know, domestic violence is not always violent and  
18 I have experienced many forms of abuse since I was a  
19 child before VAWA was enacted. On September 3, 2016,  
20 I packed what I had and I left along with my eight  
21 month old daughter. 90 miles outside of the city,  
22 all of my plans fell apart but there was no turning  
23 back because the last conversation I had with my  
24 abuser I said, "I would rather be homeless than to  
25 spend another night with you in this house."

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3 On September 17<sup>th</sup>, I made the decision to go to  
4 PATH, after hours of waiting, I was finally  
5 interviewed by a NoVA worker who then informed me  
6 that there may be a possibility that I would be sent  
7 back to my abuser because if I had lack of proof of  
8 my abuse, aside from a copy of a police order where  
9 he threatened to blow my face off if I had him  
10 arrested after strangling me.

11 Around 2:00 a.m. now September 18<sup>th</sup>, we were  
12 placed in a homeless hotel in Queens and we were told  
13 that a bus would come back to get us or return us  
14 back to PATH. The bus never returned. So, me being  
15 a New Yorker because New York City is my home, I knew  
16 how to get back to PATH but unfortunately, I had to  
17 start the intake process all over again.

18 We weren't placed until Monday night in Safe  
19 Horizon's Willow House in the Bronx. Although I  
20 wasn't DV eligible for another ten days pending  
21 investigation. At Safe Horizon, I was further abused  
22 and traumatized by an assistant that was supposed to  
23 help me. I was denied the opportunity to apply for  
24 public assistance and was threatened with being  
25 discharged for doing so.

3 From then on, I had to advocate for every single  
4 thing that I needed. With little notice of timing  
5 out, I was given six days of knowing when we would be  
6 timed out. Again, I had to return to PATH to be  
7 placed into THS shelter. Upon arriving at the THS  
8 shelter, I was informed there were no resources to  
9 help me. There was no food. There was no  
10 toiletries. There was no pantry. They couldn't even  
11 give me a metro card.

12 Again, I had to advocate for myself to get the  
13 bare minimum of what I needed to provide for myself  
14 and my child. Once my NYCHA priority had been  
15 upgraded to N1, after three months, nine days before  
16 Christmas 2017, we were finally in our permanent  
17 home. Because I advocated for myself, I was able to  
18 start my own business in the DV shelter as well as my  
19 advocacy for survivors, for victims and for abusers  
20 alike with sisters in purple. Thank you for your  
21 time.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

23 DANIRIS ESPINAL: Good afternoon Committee Chairs  
24 Ayala and Louis, members of the City Council and  
25 staff. My name is Daniris Espinal. I'm a mother and  
a survivor. Domestic violence is the leading cost of

1  
2 homelessness, especially for women and children.

3 Anyone can experience domestic violence. It doesn't  
4 discriminate on socioeconomic status, gender,  
5 cultural, or religion. Domestic violence is about  
6 course of control, isolating, monitoring,  
7 restricting, and manipulating the victims or  
8 survivors reality.

9 There is an interconnectedness between domestic  
10 violence and homelessness based on New Destiny's  
11 report. The decision is to leave an abusive partner  
12 can be complicated by fears of homelessness and city  
13 shelters. In many cases, the survivor flees the  
14 situation with their children. It's a time of  
15 survival.

16 In 2023, survivors were five more times likely to  
17 move to another shelter than to permanent housing.  
18 That year, 50 percent of survivors moved to another  
19 shelter while only nine percent found a permanent  
20 home. Emergency shelters only provided stabilized  
21 housing for up to 180 days. Without a safe place to  
22 rebuild their lives, survivors may be forced to  
23 remain in abusive situations putting their lives at  
24 risk.

3 Nationally, one in five homicide victims are  
4 killed by an intimate partner. The barriers for  
5 survivors to access supportive housing or the lack of  
6 safe and affordable apartments available. The length  
7 of time it takes to complete paperwork and  
8 inspections when renting with a subsidy. The length  
9 of time it takes to move into a supportive housing.  
10 Set aside units and/or lottery units to name some,  
11 stabilized housing is crucial for a survivor to heal  
12 and to regain control of their life. Providing  
13 access to shelters but not importantly a safe home  
14 can be lifesaving.

15 I would like to remind decision makers that these  
16 are not just numbers that you're seeing. These are  
17 people like you and me. As a society, we have to  
18 cultivate the compassion and empathy towards the  
19 children. The children suffer greatly. Domestic  
20 violence is not a glamorous theme; however, we need  
21 to normalize having these conversations more often.  
22 Educate the public of the arrest lags and the dangers  
23 of domestic violence. How can neighbors or  
24 communities help? How can anyone help if they can't  
25 identify what is going on? As a survivor myself, I  
would say that housing is just a beginning to start

3 healing. The survivor deserves to be heard and seen.

4 These resources can help validate the survivors  
5 experiences and help ease the stigma and shame.

6 Thank you for having me today.

7 STEPHANIE WOODBINE: Good morning Committee  
8 Chairs Ayala and Louis, members of the City Council  
9 and Council staff. Thank you for holding this  
10 oversight hearing on Supporting Survivors in NYC  
11 Shelter System and for the opportunity to testify on  
12 behalf of DV survivors.

13 My name is Stephanie Woodbine. I am a member of  
14 New Destiny's SVP, Survivor Voices Project and Co-  
15 Chair of the Advisory Council at the Mayor's Office  
16 to end gender based violence. The lack of permanent  
17 housing solutions for survivors is compounded by the  
18 lack of affordable housing solutions across the city.  
19 New Destiny Housing is the only organization  
20 committed to ending the double trauma of gender based  
21 violence and homelessness. I am here today, secure  
22 in my home now, only because of the assistance I  
23 received through them.

24 After years of housing instability, my family was  
25 evicted from our apartment post COVID. For months we  
stayed in friends homes, hotels, in air bnb's when I

3 could afford it. We did not qualify for DV shelters  
4 and I was afraid of entering the DHS ones.

5 I received housing navigation services from New  
6 Destiny. This was a God sent as I didn't have to go  
7 through too much retraumatization where that was  
8 concerned. My navigator acted as a liaison between  
9 me and potential landlords, cleared the way for me to  
10 maneuver homelessness mentally and emotionally.

11 I felt overwhelmed and ashamed that I had lost my  
12 home, even though much of this had to do with my  
13 mental trauma and financial insecurity due to the  
14 vexatious litigation in family court and post  
15 separation abuse from my former partner. I have done  
16 DV advocacy and outreach with the Voices Committee at  
17 the Mayor's Office to End Gender Based Violence,  
18 sharing information and supporting community events  
19 to prevent, recognize and respond to everything from  
20 intimate partner violence to sex trafficking and  
21 elderly abuse. But when I joined New Destiny's SVP  
22 after I was rehoused last year, it was an opportunity  
23 to learn more about how things worked at the policy  
24 level and to further use my voice as a lived expert.

25 Domestic violence, course of control and post  
separation abuse are insidious. They are interwoven

3 in all facets of society at every social level and  
4 across every economic class. The effective of this  
5 is that pervasive and continuous rise in family  
6 homelessness with women and children accounting for  
7 57 percent of those trapped. When home is not safe,  
8 where does one go?

9 A good home is a stabilizing factor in a  
10 survivors journey from surviving to thriving. I felt  
11 so humbled and grateful when I moved into our new  
12 home. I was able to focus on exiting survival mode  
13 and reentering society as a contributor. More  
14 survivors and their families should be afforded the  
15 tools and the opportunity to thrive. This begins  
16 with them being stably housed and being able to  
17 parent responsibly.

18 The city must work with the advocates to  
19 strengthen survivors abilities to access housing and  
20 to sustain house insecurity while creating pathways  
21 to long term stability and growth. A big step  
22 towards this is after they're housed, housing after  
23 care services, just you know a team to check in make  
24 sure everything is going on that goes along with it  
25 as well.



3 Uhm, this also means robustly funded microgrants  
4 for example. It should be - the city meaning, should  
5 look into legalizing ADU's like basements and  
6 cottages where vouchers can be used. Maybe provide  
7 landlord incentives to accept survivors with vouchers  
8 so they won't be shuttled around the various systems.

9 I broke my foot when I was homeless and traverse  
10 in the city. It was a different kind of anx from  
11 that of my fellow survivors in the shelter system but  
12 no less traumatizing. I'm sorry, I'm trying to get  
13 to the rest of this and my computer slide down.

14 Okay, sorry about that. It should look into  
15 legalizing ADU's like basements and cottages where  
16 vouchers can be used. Maybe provide landlord  
17 incentive to accept survivors with vouchers so they  
18 won't be shuttled around the various systems.

19 I broke my foot while I was homeless and traverse  
20 in the city. It was a different kind of anx from  
21 that of my fellow survivors in the shelter system but  
22 no less traumatizing and the situation which would  
23 have been avoided had I been in my own domicile.

24 A stable home therefore is also a safety factor  
25 for survivors. Thank you for the opportunity to  
speak.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Uhm, and we  
4 allowed you extra time because I wanted to be  
5 sensitive to your stories and wanted to make sure  
6 that you were able to express what you wanted to  
7 express and I just want to say thank you. I think  
8 you know when we talk about domestic violence, you  
9 know the topics of conversation, they're very somber  
10 right but I also see a lot of resilience and a lot of  
11 power in this room and you took your power back.  
12 Farah and I are colleagues in the City Council and  
13 we're both survivors as well and I think that it's a  
14 beautiful thing when we take those tragedies and flip  
15 them and use them for you know a greater good.

16 I never think that people are watching this  
17 channel when they're watching you know from home.  
18 You can actually this. There's a channel where you  
19 can watch City Council hearings but you'd be  
20 surprised at how many women actually have stopped me  
21 in the street and have thanked me for sharing my  
22 story, which it was hard to do. It's hard to share  
23 and be vulnerable and kind of you know stand naked in  
24 a room when you feel judged and you don't want people  
25 feeling sorry for you. But it's important I think  
because it's greater than each of us as individuals.

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3 We're speaking for a whole entire community of women  
4 that haven't yet found their voices and who your  
5 advocacy has the potential to help change. And so,  
6 you know I thank you for that because I know that it  
7 isn't easy but you guys are kicking ass and I don't  
8 know if that's a word that we can maybe scratch off  
9 the - but I said it and I stand by it. I'm really,  
10 really proud of you guys and excited to hear you know  
11 all of the ideas that you're bringing to the table on  
12 ways that we can change the system so that they're  
13 better for the next generation and hopefully we won't  
14 have you know too many of those and domestic violence  
15 is not something that we're seeing as prevalently in  
16 the near future. But in the meantime, it's important  
17 to continue to share our story and to advocate for  
18 those that haven't yet found their voice. Council  
19 Member Louis, did you have anything you wanted to  
20 say?

21 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Deputy Speaker, I echo your  
22 sentiments and I thank you for giving everyone extra  
23 time to share their story and as the Deputy Speaker  
24 mentioned, you attending these hearings, having the  
25 conversations and advocating helps us to further  
advocate. As I was listening to all of you speak, I

3 thought about your journey and getting FHEPS vouchers  
4 and getting increases. It's really a tough fight,  
5 whether if you're on this side or on the other side.  
6 We all need each other in different ways. So,  
7 continue to keep up the good work and stay in contact  
8 so we could further support one another. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. We're now going  
10 to call our next panel and be warned that there will  
11 be a clock. Kameeza Nizam-Chattoo, Shanequa Anne  
12 Holida, Gabriela Sandoval Requena and Chris Mann.

13 You may begin. Again, if you could hold the mic  
14 as close to you as possible and make sure that the  
15 red light is on. Any one of you, yeah.

16 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: Good afternoon  
17 Committee Chairs Ayala and Louis, members of the City  
18 Council if there are any still and the staff. Thank  
19 you so much for convening this hearing. I also want  
20 to thank the survivors who shared their testimony.  
21 It takes a lot of courage to come forward and I'm  
22 constantly inspired whenever I hear them speak.

23 My name is Gabriela Sandoval Requena. I am the  
24 Director of Policy and Communications at New Destiny.  
25 New Destiny's mission is to end the double trauma of  
abuse and homelessness among domestic violence

3 survivors. For 30 years, we've been solely dedicated  
4 to the solution of permanent housing for survivors.  
5 We are also a co-convener of the Family Homelessness  
6 Coalition and a member of the Supportive Housing  
7 Network of New York. Why do we do this work?  
8 Because domestic violence is a leading cause of  
9 homelessness in New York City pushing thousands of  
10 individuals and children through shelter. However,  
11 with so little housing options available to  
12 survivors, they are more likely to move from shelter  
13 to shelter instead of housing.

14 New Destiny recently released a report, a crisis  
15 compounded which documents the struggles and barriers  
16 that domestic violence survivors face when trying to  
17 secure affordable housing after escaping an abusive  
18 relationship. And the long term impact that they  
19 face as a result of the abuse.

20 We will submit extended written testimony, so I'd  
21 like to use this time to highlight some of the key  
22 findings of the report. As I mentioned earlier,  
23 domestic violence is one of the main causes of  
24 homelessness. In 2023, nearly 11,000 adults and  
25 children went through the domestic violence shelter  
system, the largest in the country. And year after

1  
2 year more families with children enter the separate  
3 DHS shelter system due to domestic violence, then  
4 evictions. It is extremely difficult for single  
5 adults to enter the domestic violence shelter system  
6 and I just want to flag that because that is usually  
7 LGBTQI members, community members, also people with  
8 disabilities and seniors. If I may continue Chair,  
9 I'll be brief.

10 Women of color are also impacted  
11 disproportionately. Most of the survivors in the DV  
12 shelter system are children with children under the  
13 age of 8 being the largest age group, which is deeply  
14 concerning because know the intergenerational effects  
15 of abuse and homelessness.

16 In 2023, more than 50 percent of survivors left  
17 HRA DV shelter for another shelter and only nine  
18 percent left for housing. Survivors who time out of  
19 HRA emergency domestic violence shelter without a  
20 secure placement must apply for a DHS shelter at risk  
21 of being turned away.

22 The abuse, instead of stating one last thing have  
23 negative health impacts. Survivors are more likely  
24 to develop cardiovascular disease and Type II  
25 diabetes. More than half experience post traumatic

1 stress disorder and depression and they can also  
2 sustain head trauma more likely than football players  
3 but they're rarely diagnosed.

4 Our report gives 13 recommendations within four  
5 overarching areas. I won't go through them here but  
6 I'll just mention the four overarching areas that are  
7 to expand access to housing resources and services.  
8 Ensure supportive housing is accessible and  
9 adequately funded, increase investments in  
10 microgrants and flexible funding and improve data  
11 collection and reporting. We are grateful to DSS HRA  
12 for implementing some of these priority actions such  
13 as amending the Supportive Housing Program to include  
14 survivors with children. Additionally, I'd like to  
15 thank the Council for considering legislation in this  
16 hearing to improve data collection and reporting on  
17 domestic violence shelter applications and exits.

18 We look forward to continuing to work together to  
19 increase housing resources for New Yorkers impacted  
20 by domestic violence. Thank you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

22 SHANEQUA ANNE HOLIDA: Good afternoon and thank  
23 you for inviting me to testify before the Committee  
24 today. My name is Shanequa Anne Holida and I am an  
25

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3 Association Vice President for DV shelters at Safe  
4 Horizon, which is the nations largest nonprofit  
5 victims assistance organization. We offer our client  
6 center trauma informed response to 250,000 New  
7 Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or  
8 abuse. We do this through a lens of racial equity  
9 and justice to guide our work with the clients, with  
10 each other, and in developing the public policy  
11 positions that we hold. We're grateful that the  
12 Committees are looking at how to best support  
13 domestic violence survivors in New York City's  
14 shelter system. Safe Horizon operates eight  
15 emergency and transitional domestic violence shelters  
16 that provide welcoming and supportive safe spaces  
17 with 741 beds. We also run the domestic violence  
18 hotline for the entire New York City placing  
19 survivors in all DV shelters across the five boroughs  
20 and our goal is to help survivors and their families  
21 get the resources they need to heal and thrive. We  
22 do this by offering a variety of services, including  
23 housing assistance, case management, onsite  
24 counseling, through our new counseling services that  
25 we offer through our social workers. And then we  
have one to two housing specialists within each



3 shelter to work with clients to solidify permanent  
4 housing.

5 Just two areas I would like to highlight that are  
6 important to us right now are the Safe shelter Act  
7 and the recent developments within HRAs DV shelters  
8 division. So, Safe Horizon helped to draft and then  
9 pass the state legislation, known as the Safe Shelter  
10 Act,, which will increase access to domestic violence  
11 shelters for single adult survivors. This  
12 legislation was sponsored by Assembly Member Andrew  
13 Hevesi and State Senator Andrew Gounardes and it  
14 would provide the funding flexibility shelter  
15 providers desperately need to house many more single  
16 adult survivors of trafficking and domestic and  
17 gender based violence.

18 This flexibility would actually empower the  
19 sector and help ensure that all survivors regardless  
20 of age, sexual orientation, gender identity or family  
21 status have equal access to lifesaving, temporary  
22 housing and support.

23 The other area that I wanted to highlight for the  
24 sake of time and I've submitted the written testimony  
25 to expand on the concepts, are the recent  
developments within HRAs DV shelter procedures. So,

1  
2 in July 2023, they implemented an interactive voice  
3 response system and expanded on the use of this  
4 system to a significant number of DV shelters across  
5 New York City that they had been piloting in select  
6 shelters. The system allows clients to call in  
7 directly from designated phones at the DV location.  
8 Sometimes in their units within a certain window to  
9 submit their attendance in shelter for the day and  
10 the system is proposed to simplify the attendance  
11 tracking process, reduce administrative burdens and  
12 enhance the overall efficiency of services.

13 Also, HRA has extended the time to submit  
14 attendance daily in the DV shelters to 2:00 p.m. and  
15 this addresses the varying needs of survivors in  
16 shelter because of course we know that time  
17 constraints can impede on folks ability to have their  
18 outside lives right. The previous cutoff time was  
19 10:00 a.m. and this allows the DV shelters to be more  
20 client centered around the intersectionality of  
21 survivor presence in shelter and their daily living.  
22 And the last thing that I wanted to highlight is the  
23 most recent development is the discontinuation of the  
24 requirement to submit daily attendance sheets via  
25 email and EFAP, so the billing liaisons for each

1  
2 shelter. And this helps us to reduce delays and  
3 attendance confirmation for the facilities, which  
4 improves utilization rates and increases productivity  
5 of billing submission and reconciliation. Thank you  
6 so much.

7 CHRIS MANN: Good afternoon Chairs Ayala and  
8 Louis. Thank you and the Committee Members for the  
9 opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is  
10 Chris Mann, I'm the Assistant Vice President of  
11 Policy and Advocacy at Win, which is the city's  
12 largest provider of shelter and supportive services  
13 for families experiencing homelessness. We operate  
14 16 shelters and about 500 units of permanent  
15 supportive housing throughout the five boroughs.  
16 Last night, 7,000 people called Win home, including  
17 over 3,600 children. Domestic violence remains a  
18 leading cause of homelessness for families with  
19 children in New York City, surpassing evictions and  
20 overcrowding.

21 In Fiscal Year 2023, more than 20 percent of  
22 families with children entering DHS shelter cited  
23 domestic violence as the primary cause of their  
24 homelessness. At Win, we see the impacts of domestic  
25 violence on families every day. 90 percent of the

1 families we serve are headed by women and many of  
2 them fled abusive situations seeking safety and  
3 stability for themselves and their children. Despite  
4 this immense need, we're facing significant gaps at  
5 housing options for survivors of domestic violence.  
6

7 The number of households leaving HRA domestic  
8 violence shelters for permanent housing has dropped  
9 by 18 percent between 2018 and 2023. Of the more  
10 than 2,000 survivor led households who exited  
11 emergency shelter in 2023, 50 percent moved to  
12 another shelter rather than permanent housing. With  
13 such limited housing options, survivors are often  
14 forced into a cycle of shelter to shelter movement  
15 because of arbitrary shelter stay limits in the DV  
16 system.

17 This instability is devastating for families  
18 seeking safety and a chance to rebuild their lives.  
19 This is why we support T2572 which would expand  
20 reporting on exits from domestic violence shelters.  
21 Win also supports 2573, which is aimed at helping to  
22 better understand demand for domestic violence  
23 shelters. We do have a couple questions about how to  
24 source that data. Additionally, we urge the Council  
25 to pass Resolution 363 introduced by Council Member

3 Gale Brewer, which calls on the state to pass  
4 legislation that would end harmful impacts of  
5 shelters limits and codify right to shelter in DHS DV  
6 and all shelter systems. Thank you.

7 KAMEEZA NIZAM-CHATTOO: Hi, can you hear me?

8 Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Kameeza  
9 Nizam-Chattoo and I'm the Senior Deputy Director of  
10 Residential Services of Sanctuary for Families. New  
11 York States largest provider of comprehensive  
12 services, exclusively for gender violence survivors  
13 and their children. We are grateful for the  
14 opportunity to testify on the critical topic of  
15 supporting DV survivors in the city's shelter system.

16 Our special thanks to Council Member Farah Louis  
17 and Diana Ayala, Chairs of the Committees on Women  
18 and Gender Equity and General Welfare for calling  
19 this hearing and for this advocacy on behalf of  
20 marginalized gender violence survivors. We also  
21 thank Chair Ayala for introducing the two bills being  
22 discussed today, which Sanctuary strongly supports.

23 Last year, Sanctuary provided confidential  
24 shelter and supportive services to 436 adults and  
25 children at our five shelters. Four small crisis  
shelters [INAUDIBLE 02:07:14], our 58 family tier II

1  
2 shelter that was the states first DV transitional  
3 shelter when it opened its doors in 1992. Like all  
4 residential service providers, Sanctuary makes every  
5 effort to maximize our shelter occupancy but the city  
6 DV shelter system was designed for women with minor  
7 children fleeing abuse. As a result, single  
8 survivors such as LGBTQIA+ trafficking older adults  
9 are left out in the cold.

10 The Heads and Beds per diem reimbursement model  
11 creates a serious financial dilemma for family  
12 shelter providers as they lose significant revenue  
13 every time they place single adults in units  
14 earmarked for families. We thank the City Council  
15 for its support of the Safe Shelter Act passed by the  
16 state legislator in June, which would ensure that  
17 OCFS provides full reimbursement to shelter providers  
18 when a room intended to accommodate two family  
19 members is used to house a single adult. Ultimately,  
20 we would like to see this to a three person - excuse  
21 me, to see this a three person unit included into the  
22 policy.

23 This reimbursement model poses other challenges  
24 for service providers. For instance, when a resident  
25 must spend nights away from the shelter, such as when

1  
2 they're hospitalized or need to be out of town for a  
3 valid reason such as a family member passing. A  
4 reimbursement is for hospitalization for ten days but  
5 if a client needs to go out of state for say someone  
6 passing away or if they stay out of shelter, the  
7 agency is not reimbursed, which is very much unfair  
8 since we're still providing services.

9 Another critical issue if you just give me two  
10 more minutes. Another critical issue is the state  
11 public assistance program, which are intended to  
12 provide financial help to these survivors as they  
13 work toward economic stability and independence.  
14 These benefits have not been raised for years, even  
15 decades. Currently a single mother with two children  
16 in Manhattan receives a shelter allowance of \$400 per  
17 month. We support New Destiny's proposal to urge the  
18 state and the assembly to pass A05543 which would  
19 increase the shelter allowance to 100 percent of the  
20 federal fair market rates and help to ensure that  
21 individuals can access safe and stable housing.

22 We also support New Destiny's proposal to  
23 increase the basic needs allowance to keep in place  
24 with inflation.

3 Lastly, it is no secret that a situation for  
4 shelter residents when they exit shelter is dire. We  
5 urge the Council to strongly support the housing  
6 access voucher program proposed by the state  
7 legislator, which will create a permanent statewide  
8 Section 8 like rental program. The legislation  
9 should also be urged to help noncitizen New Yorkers  
10 by passing a bill expanding eligibility for City  
11 FHEPS programs.

12 There are two vital steps to expand equitable  
13 access to housing for domestic violence survivors  
14 regarding immigration status. We applaud the joint  
15 oversight efforts of the Women and Gender Equity and  
16 General Welfare Committees and are deeply grateful  
17 for your efforts to tackle these challenging issues  
18 surrounding affordable housing in our city. Thank  
19 you for the opportunity to testify today and for your  
20 unwavering commitment to abuse survivors. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I want to  
22 recognize that we've been joined by Council Member  
23 Restler, who has a few questions.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much Chairs  
25 Ayala and Louis. Greatly appreciate your leadership  
and focus on this critically important issue and



1  
2 thank you to each of you for your great work  
3 supporting survivors of domestic violence in New York  
4 City.

5 Question I think probably for Win but anyone to  
6 jump in. You know DV is one of the two primary  
7 drivers in our family system, right for new entrance?  
8 Excuse me, in our DHS system. DV is one of the two  
9 primary drivers for families that enter the system.  
10 Do you think that as a city we strike the right  
11 balance between having enough capacity in our DV  
12 shelter system and our DHS system in meeting the  
13 needs of survivors of domestic violence?

14 CHRIS MANN: Yeah, that's a good question. I  
15 would say no. You know I think you know one of the  
16 struggles that we have is capacity in the DV system  
17 and you know it shows in the data. We have kind of a  
18 pipeline from DV shelter right, into DHS shelter.  
19 You know so, we're working with Assembly Member Cruz  
20 and Senator Wong and Sigal on legislation at the  
21 state level. They would create a right to shelter  
22 and DV shelter and eliminate time limits in those  
23 shelters, so.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And that was the next  
25 question I just wanted to ask is, you know because

1  
2 our DV shelter system is time limited, we often see  
3 families in need of having to enter into the DHS  
4 system. Have we made any improvements as a city in  
5 trying to make that a seamless or improved referral  
6 process or are we just sending people to PATH and  
7 hoping for the best?

8 CHRIS MANN: I mean, I think Gabby can probably  
9 talk better about this but I would say it's gotten  
10 worse.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Why?

12 CHRIS MANN: Because now families have to go back  
13 to PATH rather than just being able to seamlessly  
14 transition into DHS.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: If a family is in the DV  
16 shelter system time limited, we know that on day  
17 certain, they're going to have no place to go, why  
18 would we send them through a complicated rigmarole to  
19 ensure that they have safe and stable housing?

20 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: Yeah, I think I  
21 second Chris, we ask the same question to the agency.  
22 And we heard earlier today during the HRA testimony  
23 that apparently they are looking into reinstating  
24 that rule but it's devastating, it's retraumatizing.  
25 Just the fact that you have to reapply for shelter,

1  
2 go through the whole process, it's just very, very I  
3 mean, definition of unfair, yes.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And one of the things  
5 that I know our Chairwoman has supported for a long  
6 time and that I strongly believe in as well, you know  
7 is the decentralization of PATH is critically  
8 important for families around the city. Why we would  
9 send families from Sunset Park or East New York or  
10 downtown Brooklyn to the South Bronx or Southeast  
11 Queens, wherever it may be, that every single one of  
12 those families has to go to the South Bronx doesn't  
13 make sense and I for one would welcome a Brooklyn  
14 PATH center in downtown Brooklyn in District 33  
15 because it's the most convenient place to get in  
16 Brooklyn.

17 And so, you know I have made that very clear to  
18 DSS leadership for years and will continue to do so  
19 and help them identify space if that ever becomes an  
20 option. So, thanks so much for the opportunity to  
21 ask a couple questions and most of all, thank you for  
22 your hard work.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Council Member  
24 Louis.

3 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you Chair. This  
4 question is for Win. Local Law 45 that we passed  
5 earlier this year establishes a program to assist  
6 with door and window repairs and security for  
7 survivors of domestic and gender based violence. I  
8 know we've had an ongoing security breach issue at  
9 Glennwood Win, so it would be great to know if we  
10 could get the status of the locks to the gate? Being  
11 that we do have survivors of domestic violence at  
12 this particular site in my district and neighbors who  
13 are very upset that there aren't security measures at  
14 Glennwood Win in the district.

15 CHRIS MANN: Yeah, thank you for the question and  
16 certainly you know we've been talking offline and  
17 like happy to continue that conversation. You know  
18 it's an issue that we've worked on addressing and  
19 continue to work on addressing. So, if - the last I  
20 heard, it sounded like that was mostly resolved but  
21 if it's not certainly, lets talk offline and we'll  
22 make sure that that gets resolved.

23 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Yeah, I would appreciate it  
24 if we could keep talking about it because I know it's  
25 still an issue of security breach with that  
particular lock but we just want to make sure that

3 survivors feel safe at this location and within the  
4 district. So, look forward to that conversation and  
5 a meeting with Christine Quin. Thank you Chair.

6 CHRIS MANN: Agreed. Yeah, I'll reach out to  
7 Daniel in your office to set it up.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. One of the things  
9 that I did want to ask was about the time restriction  
10 that the 30-60 day rules. So, HRA testified that -  
11 well, DSS testified that that does not apply in  
12 domestic violence shelters. Is that true?

13 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: So, for crisis  
14 shelter, you're able to stay up to three months.  
15 After that, we put in for extensions and you're able  
16 to stay up to 180. After that, if you do not get  
17 chosen for a tier II shelter, which is done through  
18 HRA taking into consideration safe areas and  
19 household size. If you're not chosen for that, then  
20 it's unfortunately packed or we speak to the clients  
21 if there's somewhere else that they could go. If  
22 it's family, because obviously we don't want to send  
23 our families back into the homeless shelter system.  
24 But unfortunately, that's usually the only thing they  
25 have because once you live in the community, you  
don't necessary qualify for the housing vouchers.

1  
2 So, the only - basically the only options they have  
3 is going to PATH.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's the rule for new  
5 migrant families.

6 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: Crisis shelters, yes.  
7 For anyone residing in the crisis shelter.

8 CHRIS MANN: So, my understanding is that the 30  
9 and 60 day rule, because there's already the  
10 restrictions in DV shelters, wouldn't apply in DV  
11 shelters and they only just started applying in DHS  
12 shelters but have not actually rolled out yet but we  
13 expect that they will soon.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Thank you guys.  
15 We will now call our next panel which consists of  
16 Elijah Pivan Franke, Stephanie Daer, Blaire  
17 Doroshwalther. I'm sorry if I'm messing up your name  
18 and Teal Inzunza. Good morning, you can begin.

19 TEAL INZUNZA: Good afternoon I think now; Chair  
20 Ayala, Chair Louis and the rest of the City Council  
21 Members that are here. My name is Teal Inzunza. I  
22 am the Associate Vice President of our Justice  
23 Initiatives Department at the Urban Resource  
24 Institute. The nations largest provider of domestic  
25 violence shelter services. We serve over 2,000

1  
2 people affected by domestic and intimate partner  
3 violence and homelessness. Thank you for the  
4 opportunity to discuss the critical issues survivors  
5 face in accessing safe and affordable housing. The  
6 recent report from New Destiny Housing highlights  
7 several severe challenges survivors of domestic  
8 violence in New York City face including immigration  
9 status limited, financial resources and a shortage of  
10 appropriate housing programs. These barriers not  
11 only jeopardize the safety of survivors but also  
12 hinder their long term stability.

13 URI fully supports several key recommendations  
14 from this report. One, expanding City FHEPS  
15 eligibility. Two, creating statewide Section 8 like  
16 housing vouchers. Three, access to the shared  
17 program for Tier II shelters. Four, including  
18 survivors in the New York City 1515 supportive  
19 housing. Five, investing \$6 million in NGBV's  
20 microgrant program. And lastly, reflecting the  
21 housing needs of single survivors as we've heard many  
22 testify today. Each of these recommendations are  
23 essential ensuring survivors can escape abusive  
24 situations and rebuild their lives.

3 URI stands ready to support their implementation  
4 and continue advocating for policies that protect and  
5 uplift survivors. We will share more about these  
6 issues in our written testimony and thank you for all  
7 of your leadership and on these urgent issues. We  
8 appreciate you.

9 BLAIRE DOROSHWALTHER: Good morning and thank you  
10 to the Committee on General Welfare and Women and  
11 Gender Equity for the opportunity to share my  
12 testimony. My name is Blaire Doroshwalther. I'm the  
13 Director of Economic Empowerment at the Urban  
14 Resource Institute.

15 Our program aims to provide economic justice  
16 through financial stability, meaningful employment  
17 and financial healing. These are crucial tools to  
18 economic equity for survivors and their community.  
19 Every day, we see the detrimental impacts the public  
20 benefits cliff has on survivors safety and security.  
21 A safety net that is aimed to support low income New  
22 Yorkers access handcuffs to financial stability and  
23 independence. For instance, to qualify for FHEPS B  
24 Housing Voucher, survivors must earn nearly at or  
25 below 200 percent of the poverty level. City FHEPS  
has comparable limitations.



3 If a survivors income slightly exceeds this  
4 threshold, they risk losing essential public benefits  
5 including housing vouchers. Additionally, City FHEPS  
6 is the only option for single survivors but they need  
7 to have an open public assistance case, however,  
8 going to public benefits office, they rarely open a  
9 public benefits case without cash assistance. This  
10 puts singles in a catch 22.

11 I once worked with a client who juggled two jobs  
12 to pay rent before she came to shelter. After  
13 entering shelter, her income surpassed the  
14 eligibility limit for public benefits yet it wasn't  
15 enough to afford a market rate apartment. To qualify  
16 for cash assistance to secure FHEPS B Voucher for  
17 permanent housing, she had to quit one of her jobs.  
18 This scenario is not uncommon. Ironically these  
19 programs require employment, yet survivors can't  
20 increase their hours, take additional jobs, advance  
21 their careers or accept promotions without risking  
22 the loss of benefits, which ultimately leads to the  
23 loss of housing vouchers and their home.

24 Many landlords are reluctant to accept vouchers,  
25 often distrusting the untimely payments from HRA. I  
once assisted a survivor who landlord hadn't been

1  
2 paid by HRA for 11 months. In eviction cases, it's  
3 the tenant who is liable, not HRA. Survivors who  
4 burden - uhm are also burdened by economic abuse and  
5 the average survivor carries \$104,000 of debt in  
6 their lifetime. Many survivors face identity theft,  
7 fraud and coercion perpetrated by the abusive party.  
8 They may not even realize this abuse until they are  
9 denied housing.

10 On average, a survivor loses \$1,280 a month to  
11 their abuser. This takes a physical and emotional  
12 toll for families. I'll just finish up. Without any  
13 of these changes, survivors are left paying for their  
14 abuse.

15 ELIJAH PIVAN FRANKE: Good afternoon. Thank you  
16 to the New York City Council, the Committee on  
17 General Welfare and the Committee on Women and Gender  
18 Equity for the opportunity to present this testimony.  
19 My name is Elijah Pivan Franke and I'm the  
20 Coordinator of Equity Initiatives at Urban Resource  
21 Institute Economic Empowerment program.

22 URI's Economic Empowerment program supports  
23 families impacted by domestic violence and  
24 homelessness and their journey's to achieve economic  
25 independence and growth. The EEP aims to achieve

3 this goal through work readiness programing, survivor  
4 career counseling and job development support.

5 Financial empowerment for survivors of domestic  
6 violence is paramount to achieving safety for  
7 themselves and their families. More than 98 percent  
8 of survivors of domestic violence also experience  
9 financial abuse, presenting a barrier to their  
10 journeys for economic empowerment and independence.

11 The EEP program focuses on equipping these survivors  
12 for support to reenter the workforce and obtain  
13 employment that offer living wages. However, one of  
14 the main obstacles that survivors experience is the  
15 lack of and inaccessibility of child care. This lack  
16 of child care for survivors who are seeking  
17 employment often forces them to put their job  
18 opportunities and subsequent economic freedom on  
19 hold.

20 While social services such as HRA and ACS offer  
21 child care vouchers, these vouchers are often  
22 conditional on the fact that survivors can prove that  
23 they are employed and can take up to 30 days to  
24 process. I work with survivors who after months of  
25 searching for employment finally get a job offer.  
Only to have to turn this offer down due to the fact

3 that even if child care is approved, they won't have  
4 the opportunity to place their children with a  
5 reliable provider by the time their job needs them to  
6 start working.

7 Other times, survivors have had to ask family  
8 members to take care of their children because they  
9 could not afford child care when they start working  
10 with no guarantee that the child care voucher will  
11 even be approved after 30 days. In some cases, they  
12 are approved and the survivor can continue working  
13 only to lose their job later because the voucher  
14 expired or is terminated, reversing the efforts they  
15 have made to achieve financial stability and  
16 independence.

17 Achieving employment and financial stability is  
18 the way that survivors achieve safety. They should  
19 not have to worry that they will be unable to accept  
20 a job because it takes too long for their child care  
21 vouchers to be approved and moreover, maintain a job  
22 due to the fact that their child care vouchers may be  
23 taken away for arbitrary reasons.

24 Child care should be the means for survivors to  
25 achieve safety, not the barrier. The EEP's goal is  
to support survivors on their journey's to financial

1  
2 empowerment and safety but we currently have a  
3 waitlist of over 100 people due to the lack of  
4 staffing positions available. The EEP is seeking  
5 funding to hire more staff to serve more survivors  
6 who are in need of our services. Further  
7 contributions would also give us the ability to  
8 provide for survivors who need childcare while they  
9 start their careers or search for employment.

10 For survivors of domestic violence, financial  
11 empowerment is safety. Employment is the key to  
12 financial stability and survivors deserve safety  
13 above all else. Thank you very much.

14 STEPHANIE DAER: Good afternoon Chair Ayala,  
15 Chair Louis and esteemed members of the City Council.  
16 My name is Stephanie Daer and I'm the Program Manager  
17 for the Crime Victim Services at the Urban Resource  
18 Institute. Crime Victim Services provides crucial  
19 services to domestic violence survivors including  
20 emotional support, advocacy, court accompaniments and  
21 education on their legal rights. CVSP's goal is to  
22 help survivors navigate their journey to safety,  
23 healing and stability but one of the most persistent  
24 challenges they face is securing permanent housing.

3 Housing remains the most critical need for  
4 domestic violence survivors, yet it is the most  
5 difficult to secure due to several barriers. One of  
6 the major challenges is that many landlords  
7 discriminate against survivors who use vouchers like  
8 FHEPS B, which is specifically designed to help  
9 survivors secure housing. Unfortunately landlords  
10 frequently refuse to accept these vouchers with some  
11 openly expressing their reluctance to rent to  
12 domestic violence survivors. I had a landlord state  
13 to me, "I do not want those kind of problems here."

14 This type of discrimination prevents survivors  
15 from finding the stable housing they need to rebuild  
16 their lives. While some survivors do qualify for a  
17 FHEPS B voucher, others especially those who are  
18 working but do not qualify for an HRA case, are left  
19 without any viable housing options while in emergency  
20 shelters. The clients are often forced to transition  
21 into DHS family shelters, only just to qualify for  
22 programs such as SODA, which is the special one-time  
23 assistance program that help clients pay for one  
24 entire year of rent.

25 Expanding voucher programs like FHEPS B and SODA  
would greatly benefit survivors in achieving

1 permanent housing and allow them to focus on healing.

2 Another critical issue is the lack of consistent  
3 housing supports. The Emergency Housing program EHV  
4 was offered to all domestic violence survivors in  
5 2022, which proved to be a lifeline for many of our  
6 clients. During its implementation, I was able to  
7 assist 14 survivors in securing their vouchers and  
8 moving into permanent housing. However, the EHV  
9 program ended in 2023 and is no longer available to  
10 survivors, leaving many without a crucial resource.

11 Reinstating programs like EHV would provide survivors  
12 with more opportunities to find safe and stable  
13 housing.

14  
15 URI remains committed to advocating for these  
16 essential changes and we urge City Council to  
17 prioritize the housing needs of domestic violence  
18 survivors. Thank you for your time and attention to  
19 these critical issues and I'm happy to answer any  
20 questions you have.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. We don't have any  
22 questions but I wanted to thank you for raising the  
23 issue on child care and we will be sure to include  
24 some follow up questions to the Administration on  
25 those. Thank you so much. Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE  
2 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY 120

3 We want to call our following panel. Kerena Lim-  
4 Peralta, Laura Horvath-Roa, Judith Goldener and  
5 Rachel Kang.

6 Kerena, you're here, okay. Wait, I'm missing  
7 somebody so I'm trying to figure out who. Laura?  
8 Judith? Judith Goldener? No, okay and Rachel. You  
9 may begin. Your mic is not on. Make sure the red  
10 light is on and try to push it a little closer to  
11 you. Do you see the light on? I'm sorry. The red  
12 light, there, okay.

13 Good afternoon Deputy Speaker Ayala and Chair  
14 Louis and the Committee. Thank you for this  
15 opportunity today and for addressing this critical  
16 issue. My name is Kerena Lim-Peralta and I'm a  
17 Social Work Supervisor with the Center for Family  
18 Representation Inc., CFR in their Bronx practice.

19 I work directly with parents facing ACS neglect  
20 and abuse prosecutions in Bronx Family Court. CFR is  
21 the county-wide assigned indigent provider offering  
22 legal representation to parents with ACS cases in  
23 Queens, Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island. CFR  
24 helps families prevent and navigate family policing  
25 investigations and works to reunite families who are  
separated by the foster system. Since our founding



3 in 2002, we have represented more than 13,500 parents  
4 with more than 27,500 children. We take the lead of  
5 directly impacted families and seek a world where the  
6 family policing system is dismantled until it is  
7 abolished. We know that family safety and wellbeing  
8 can be achieved without surveillance, prosecution or  
9 separation. Our clients who have survived domestic  
10 violence often experience staying in a shelter as  
11 another experience of coercion and surveillance that  
12 puts their families at risk of harm.

13 When our clients and their children are forced to  
14 comply with arbitrary shelter policies, shelter staff  
15 who are mandated reporters often report them to the  
16 Statewide Central Registry, the SCR. Prompting a  
17 child protective investigation or what we refer to as  
18 a family policing investigation by ACS. Family  
19 policing investigations are harmful themselves and  
20 can exacerbate feelings of fear and instability that  
21 many families who are fleeing domestic violence  
22 experience.

23 The families that we work with have incredible  
24 resiliency and lean on their inner strength and  
25 courage. Leaving dangerous situations in a state of  
crisis for safety and security, only to realize that

1  
2 these things are incredibly difficult to find within  
3 the city's shelter system. Shelters designated for  
4 domestic violence survivors do not guarantee safety  
5 and survivors can also face retraumatization within  
6 shelters. There's a lack of physical and emotional  
7 space and support. Survivors have shared that often  
8 times shelter staff do not have conversations with  
9 them to better understand their families situation  
10 and they are affected by judgement and gender  
11 stigmas.

12 Ending mandated reporting and permitting shelter  
13 staff to first work with families to provide them  
14 with direct onsite support and resources before  
15 initiating a family policing investigation would  
16 protect CFR's clients from further harm. Many people  
17 do not know what happens after a call and report is  
18 made to the SCR but we at CFR continue to see the  
19 long lasting and generational affects of the family  
20 policing system. Thank you for hearing our testimony  
21 today.

22 LAURA HORVATH-ROA: Good afternoon. My name is  
23 Laura Horvath-Roa and I use she, her pronouns, and  
24 I'm a Staff Attorney with the New York City  
25 Antiviolence Project, AVP. Thank you to the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE  
2 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY 123

3 Committee on General Welfare and the Committee on  
4 Women and Gender Equity for holding this oversight  
5 hearing. AVP is the coordinator of the New York  
6 State LGBTQ Intimate Partner Violence Network and  
7 along with colleagues from all over the state, we  
8 have produced a toolkit called "Increasing Shelter  
9 Access to LGBTQ Survivors of Intimate Partner  
10 Violence."

11 Today, I'll share some of the key recommendations  
12 from the publication and you'll also find copies of  
13 the short guide with copies of my written testimony.  
14 The shelter access tool, we have developed, guide  
15 shelter staff through the basics of agency  
16 assessment, which includes key questions for  
17 evaluating the intake process, communicating  
18 inclusiveness to all clients and screening that  
19 includes primary aggressor assessments.

20 Inclusiveness is communicated at the level of  
21 staff language and signage throughout the space.  
22 However, it also includes access to gender neutral  
23 spaces, especially bathrooms, which may also require  
24 education and accountability for all people using the  
25 space, not just LGBTQ survivors.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE  
2 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY 124

3 We ask today that the needs of LGBTQ survivors be  
4 interwoven in all shelters and expanded safeguards  
5 and training developed to ensure the safety and  
6 dignity of the LGBTQ population. AVP has developed a  
7 framework for putting shelter access into practice.  
8 We also offer detailed self-guided assessment tools  
9 that shelters can use to get a picture of how  
10 accessible they are for LGBTQ people. We also offer  
11 LGBTQ cultural competency trainings to staff and  
12 volunteers at shelters and other service providers.  
13 Thank you so much for your time.

14 RACHEL KANG: Good afternoon. My name is Rachel  
15 Kang, Director of Intervention services at the Korean  
16 American Family Service Center and I will be  
17 testifying today on behalf of KAFSC and the  
18 collective. A coalition of gender based violence  
19 organizations serving immigrant communities that also  
20 includes Sakhi for South Asian Survivors, Sauti Yetu  
21 Center for African Women and Families, Violence  
22 Intervention Program, and Womankind.

23 KAFSC is dedicated to empowering immigrant  
24 survivors of gender-based violence through  
25 comprehensive services. Last year alone, KAFSC  
provided safe housing and support to over 200

3 survivors and we provide a 24-hour multilingual  
4 hotline. Last year, VIP also sheltered 117 adults  
5 and 147 children.

6 While we commend the city for recognizing the  
7 ongoing needs for language access in shelters, the  
8 reality is that many GBV survivors are still  
9 struggling to obtain shelter and benefits due to  
10 language and cultural barriers. Some of the  
11 obstacles that immigrant survivors and/or staff face  
12 includes: Inconsistent availability of interpreters  
13 and cultural sensitivity training for shelter staff.  
14 Steep challenges in finding affordable housing after  
15 shelter. Survivors who are ineligible for subsidies  
16 and benefits facing homelessness and obtaining timely  
17 response from city agencies during urgent situations,  
18 such as seeking immediate DV shelter placements. We  
19 urge the city to increase its funding for DV shelters  
20 that serve immigrant communities to improve both  
21 language access and cultural competency training.

22 There have been positive changes seen at DV  
23 shelters as well, including the collaboration with  
24 health and hospitals, which has resulted in shelter  
25 residents being able to access mental health care for  
themselves and their children and we encourage the

3 expansion of this program. We appreciate Council  
4 Member Ayala's efforts to increase awareness of how  
5 many and how often survivors are exiting shelter  
6 through the two new DV shelter reporting bills.  
7 Currently, DV shelter providers report to OCFS on  
8 denials and admissions but not on exits.

9 We recommend strengthening partnerships between  
10 city agencies and community based organizations like  
11 the members of the collective to ensure that  
12 survivors receive timely, comprehensive support and  
13 are not left waiting for critical services. Thank  
14 you for the opportunity to testify today and I'm  
15 happy to answer any questions you may have.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: No question at this time.  
17 Thank you so much. We will now call the following  
18 panel. Juan Diaz, Catherine Trapani, Barbara Many,  
19 Heaven Berhane. You may begin.

20 JUAN DIAZ: Thank you Chair Ayala and Chair Louis  
21 and members of the Committees on General Welfare and  
22 Women and Gender Equity for holding today's hearing.  
23 My name is Juan Diaz. I'm a Policy Associate at  
24 Citizen's Committee for Children, CCC, a multi-issue  
25 children's advocacy organization.

3 CCC is a co-convener of the Family Homeless  
4 Coalition, FHC. The recently released report from  
5 New Destiny, a crisis component highlights the  
6 intersection of poverty, gender, race, and how this  
7 impact it makes of violence survivors and it tells us  
8 the impact. We were shocked to see that 23 percent  
9 of last year, 23 percent of new population at DHS  
10 shelter with families with children, compared to 11  
11 percent on housing eviction cases. We support Intro.  
12 2572 and 2573, which would improve data collection  
13 and efficiency in program delivery.

14 However, we also support specific programs and  
15 initiatives that will improve the housing stability  
16 of domestic violence survivors, including to continue  
17 pushing for more set asides at HPD homeless shelter  
18 and also to increase funding for End Gender Violence  
19 Grants at \$6 million. Most importantly, we also  
20 encourage the city administration to include domestic  
21 violence survivors for City FHEPS assistance and  
22 especially to increase funding for Home Base. Home  
23 Base providers are key in assisting domestic violence  
24 survivors once they exit shelter with after care  
25 services and also when they're in the community and  
trying to flee abusers for transfers with City FHEPS.

3 So, it is important every increasing need to increase  
4 funding for Home Base to address these issues. I'll  
5 provide more accommodations in a written testimony.

6 Thank you.

7 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Good afternoon. Sorry, I'm  
8 short, I'm going to try to move closer. Thank you so  
9 much. My name is Catherine Trapani. I'm the  
10 Assistant Vice President for Public Policy at  
11 Volunteers of America Greater New York. We operate  
12 six emergency domestic violence shelters. One tier  
13 II shelter and several other facilities on the DHS  
14 side of the shop for families with children as well  
15 as single adults.

16 I will submit written testimony with more details  
17 from our teams on the ground with things that we want  
18 the Council know, as well as comments on the  
19 legislation but I want to just briefly use this time  
20 to tough on some things that have come up today.

21 So, the first thing Chair Ayala, you had been  
22 asking questions about whether or not persons from  
23 HERCs or asylum seekers are subject to time limits on  
24 the DV side. They're not so I am pleased to tell you  
25 that we operate two shelter, uh no three shelters for  
asylum seekers that will soon be subject to time



1  
2 limits and we are proactively screening anyone there  
3 to see if there are survivors to try to move them  
4 over to vacancies in our DV portfolio so that they  
5 can stay in the care of Volunteers of America and not  
6 have to have even shorter timeframes and we are  
7 encouraging all of our sort of partners out there to  
8 do that proactive DV screening so that if we can take  
9 them in, because we weirdly do have vacancies on the  
10 DV side, that that will be a more stable place.

11 So, I just wanted to assure you that that is -  
12 we're attempting to make that happen because we're  
13 thinking along the same lines.

14 The other thing that I think is unique to our  
15 shelter programs is that we try to offer enhanced  
16 services to survivors, particularly those that are  
17 impacted by traumatic brain injury or brain trauma.  
18 Around two-thirds of survivors that are in our  
19 shelters, we've done a first in the nation screening  
20 protocol that has identified symptoms of traumatic  
21 brain injury and we know that survivors very often  
22 have suffered injuries to the head or the neck that  
23 are consistent with brain trauma but very often it  
24 goes undiagnosed and is mistaken for other behavioral  
25 health issues because the symptoms can really be very

1 similar. So, for example, you know feeling  
2 scattered, fatigued, anxious, those kinds of things,  
3 people will think that that's a mental health issue  
4 when in fact there might be a physical cause. And  
5 so, we have really pioneered this model to do the  
6 proactive screening and then adjust our programmatic  
7 offerings like workforce development and other things  
8 to make accommodations for persons with TBI, so that  
9 they can thrive and be successful when they  
10 transition into the community. And so, Majority  
11 Leader Farias has a bill Into. 29 that would expand  
12 that training on TBI's for first responders to DV's  
13 so more people can do that.

14 I know it's not the subject of today's hearing  
15 but it feels very relevant because the long term  
16 stability of survivors really depends on our ability  
17 to identify what their service needs are, both while  
18 they're in shelter and when they transition to  
19 housing.

20 So, I just wanted to make sure that we had a  
21 chance to kind of touch on that but in my written  
22 testimony, you're going to find some recommendations  
23 on how to enhance services to survivors both on the  
24 DV shelter side, which centers around some of the  
25

1  
2 recommendations of my colleagues. So, just  
3 eliminating arbitrary time limits by supporting the  
4 [INAUDIBLE 02:43:54] bill up in Albany. Implementing  
5 the DV safe act and increase access to single  
6 survivors, which you've talked a lot about today.

7 And that on the DHS side, just really owning and  
8 recognizing that those DHS shelters, that even we  
9 operate are not equipped with the same survivor  
10 centered care that you can get on the DV shelter.  
11 So, really aligning and rightsizing the systems are  
12 super critical and then expanding access to community  
13 based DV services to accommodate persons that are  
14 transitioning out of shelter or who have been placed  
15 in the DHS shelter for lack of space, so that people  
16 can have seamless access to care. A lot of the  
17 existing networks of FJC's and non-risk providers  
18 that we heard about from the Administration this  
19 morning are focused on persons in emergency  
20 situations. And so, for things like after care or  
21 long term stability services, it just doesn't feel  
22 like the right fit or accessible so there's just a  
23 gap that we hope can get filled. So, I just want to  
24 thank you for holding this hearing. Thank you for  
25 your attention to data near and dear to my heart. I

1 ran the statistics for advocacy program at New  
2 Destiny for nine years before my career changed, so  
3 appreciate you have some notes in the written and  
4 certainly look forward to keep working with both of  
5 you on these important issues, so thanks.  
6

7 CATHERINE TRAPANI: It's on now, thank you. Good  
8 afternoon Chairs Ayala and Louis and esteemed members  
9 of the Council. Thank you guys so much. My name is  
10 Catherine Trapani and I actually serve as the Project  
11 Director of the Rise Project at the Center for  
12 Justice Innovation.

13 At Rise, we transform responses to intimate  
14 partner violence focusing on the intersection for gun  
15 violence. And so what we've seen is that over the  
16 past few years the instances of domestic violence, as  
17 we've heard today, homicides have been increasing.  
18 So, we know that there have been 71 domestic violence  
19 homicides in New York in 2022 and up nearly 15  
20 percent from the year before. So, this is a very  
21 important issue and I'm glad that we're having this  
22 conversation today.

23 But in addition to that, the effects of domestic  
24 violence trickle down through generations creating  
25 cycles of violence and trauma within marginalized

3 communities. With over 40 percent of all families in  
4 the Department of Homeless Services having  
5 experienced DV, it is important that we expand  
6 services for this vulnerable community. Often people  
7 experiencing domestic violence as we heard from  
8 different survivors here today and different  
9 agencies, have to leave their places they consider  
10 home for their safety and do not always have the  
11 means to afford places to live. This often results  
12 in immediate need to seek shelter.

13 Many survivors that we work with report feeling  
14 unsafe in shelter, fleeing one dangerous situation to  
15 another while their in crisis, they're navigating the  
16 system. Justifying themselves in another crisis and  
17 in other dangerous situations. Some survivors, as we  
18 heard today do have past victimizations in shelters  
19 which discouraged them from leaving their current  
20 situation. And then further, the scarcity of beds in  
21 need for victims to transition to store their  
22 belongings in domestic violence shelters intensifies  
23 the challenges that survivors and their children  
24 encounter when seeking refuge.

25 Recently the Rise Project, we work with a client  
who was forced to leave her partner related to a DV

1  
2 situation and while she was navigating, we were  
3 supporting her with Sisters in Purple, another DV  
4 organization. We came across the challenge of she  
5 couldn't be able to bring her stuff and for her, that  
6 was an important thing, right? To be able to have  
7 your stuff when you're leaving a situation, you want  
8 to feel a sense of safety, a sense of normalcy. And  
9 so, we had to, what we did as the Rise Project is we  
10 supported her with safety planning, transportation  
11 and we identified storage that we could pay for to  
12 pay for her stuff so that she could feel a sense of  
13 stability and safety as she went into the shelter  
14 system.

15 But these are things that we don't want to have  
16 to have people to navigate through when they're going  
17 to the shelter system. You don't want to have to be  
18 thinking about these things. You want to find safety  
19 and in finding them safety, it helps to ensure that  
20 people lives are saved right and that we don't lose  
21 lives because we know that if they have to go back to  
22 their homes right and there is a gun in the home,  
23 it's a lot of times more likely that this woman,  
24 particularly women and Black women will be killed.

3 So, I thank you so much for you guys for having  
4 us be here today to testify and speak on behalf of  
5 this very vulnerable population.

6 BARBARA MANY: Hi, good afternoon. My name is  
7 Barbara Many and I am 56 years old. I have two  
8 disabled sons. I'm here because of some agencies  
9 misconduct and also abuse on us. My two sons and I  
10 have become homeless since June 2018.

11 First, we had a Section 8 voucher. I had the  
12 Section 8 voucher for almost 20 years with my other  
13 two older sons. 2017 the apartment that we were  
14 leaving were unavailable so the city told us to go to  
15 shelter. So, we moved our things to storage and then  
16 the city moved us - placed us in a shelter in Queens.  
17 At that time, my oldest, my youngest son was here  
18 with me, was 12 years old and he hasn't been to  
19 school since 12 years. That was a lot, 13 years.  
20 Since 13 years when he turned 13. So, when we were  
21 in the shelter, the shelter told me to look for  
22 housing because after six months our Section 8  
23 account expired. So, I began looking for an  
24 apartment.

25 So, after two months, I found an apartment here  
on Flatbush and the lease, we had one year lease.

3 So, May 2018, the lease expired in 2018. The  
4 management didn't renew the voucher, so I decided to  
5 move my children out of the city. In the meantime,  
6 after they didn't renew the voucher, I decided to  
7 seek shelter from DHS. DHS refused to place us in  
8 shelter, so I decided to move my children to Albany.  
9 In Albany, they give us one month to stay in the  
10 shelter. After one month, they told us move out.  
11 So, we came back to the city 2000-same year June 2018  
12 to see if DHS will place us in a shelter. Again, DHS  
13 refused us shelter, saying that we don't qualify.  
14 Why? Because my children's address was switched. In  
15 other words, they were changed by HRA, so every time  
16 you go to a shelter, even though my children are with  
17 me, the DHS system says my children are not with me.  
18 They are living in different places.

19 So, it became a problem, so I decided to move  
20 from the states with my children. First, we went to  
21 Canada. We went to Washington DC, out of state, to  
22 seek shelter. They refused; they denied us. So, I  
23 have to sister in Canada. My sister decided to let  
24 us come and move in with her, so I used to be on  
25 disability after I had my son. And then, so that  
income was the one that was helping us rent places,



1  
2 rent motels. So, after Canada, we went to California  
3 to see if we can get shelter there. The first  
4 shelter was Ocean Side. We were given one month.  
5 Every shelter, three shelters were giving one month  
6 to stay. So, the last shelter was San Diego  
7 Salvation Army. Then I decided to look for an  
8 apartment. So, we found apartment in Ocean Side.

9 In the meantime, before I moved out of the state  
10 of New York, I requested the voucher to be put out to  
11 California, which was never did. So, which was never  
12 transferred. So, in California I was looking for it,  
13 for the voucher to come but it never was transferred.  
14 So, in the shelter they told me to look for a place  
15 otherwise they're going to throw us out on the  
16 street. So, I decided to use the - at that time, all  
17 of us were receiving Social Security Disability. So,  
18 when I found the apartment, it was very expensive so  
19 I have to use all the disability money to pay the  
20 rent and then also go for food pantries. That was  
21 what you were depending on in Ocean Side.

22 So, four months later, the owner said - money  
23 became a problem, we couldn't afford it. So, the  
24 owner evicted us. So, I decided to come back with my  
25 children to Virginia to see if I can find - I'm from

1  
2 Gona. I decided to come to Virginia to see if I can  
3 find people from my country. So, there I met  
4 somebody from my country in Regan Airport and this  
5 person allowed us to move in with him from August  
6 2019 to 2021.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, ma'am can you wrap up.

8 BARBARA MANY: The house. The owner decided to  
9 sell the house.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Ma'am, can you uhm -

11 BARBARA MANY: Sure, sure. So, what I'm trying  
12 to say is because of this corruption, my son have no  
13 education from 30 years old and even when he came  
14 back to the city to seek shelter from [02:53:42] same  
15 thing. The first shelter in Brooklyn, here in  
16 Brooklyn, we stayed there for nine months with no  
17 housing assistance. With no also, my children's  
18 Social Security money have been claimed because we're  
19 homeless. Social Security didn't know where we was,  
20 therefore, it was paid by third parties who said my  
21 children aren't being care by.

22 Right now, currently we've been shipped to four  
23 shelters from February to October. We have no money  
24 to eat and also my son, the oldest one has Type II  
25 diabetes. The shelter currently that we're in now,

1  
2 before this shelter, we were in Bronx I was arrested  
3 for trespassing. They told us we are not eligible to  
4 stay there so they called DHS police to arrest me for  
5 more than six hours while my disabled son who is also  
6 Type II and severely mentally disabled, hungry with  
7 no medication.

8 Finally, they let me go and said that they are  
9 not going to press charges, so we have to come back  
10 to PATH. PATH also continued saying that I have to  
11 provide for the past two years, which I documented  
12 for the past two years where we have been. Otherwise  
13 they are not going to place us in shelters.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, I think, I think that  
15 uhm I appreciate your testimony. I think that this  
16 warrants maybe a further offline discussion. Maybe  
17 we can have the staff get your information so that we  
18 can figure out how to be helpful but thank you for  
19 sharing your experience.

20 BARBARA MANY: Can I share this? Because Section  
21 8, currently we don't have the Section 8. It has  
22 been given to somebody else. I requested it in 2019  
23 when I came back to New York to ask why Section 8  
24 wasn't transferred to California. So, please, I need  
25 your help with the Section 8.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, one of the staffers  
4 will collect your information and then we'll figure  
5 out how to be helpful.

6 BARBARA MANY: Yes, yes ma'am.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Thank you to this  
8 panel.

9 BARBARA MANY: Thank you to this panel.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: We will now be moving to our  
11 final panel which would be a Zoom panel. So, we're  
12 going to be calling up Sharlena Powell, Janyll  
13 Canals, Shani Adess, Debbie Donastorg. I'm so sorry  
14 if I'm like completing butchering your name.  
15 Danielle Emery and Steven DeCastro. We're going to  
16 unmute Sharlena first.

17 SHARLENA POWELL: Hi, good afternoon. Please  
18 bear with me.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: You may begin Sharlena.

21 SHARLENA POWELL: Okay. I'm just sound check to  
22 see if you can hear me.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yes.

24 SHARLENA POWELL: Hi, good afternoon. Thank you  
25 for the opportunity to provide a testimony online.  
The title of my testimony is called, "DV Shelter Exit

3 Planning from the Lens of an Unaccompanied or Single  
4 Person Household Survivor and a Subject Matter  
5 Expert." I'm happy to be responding to T20242572 as  
6 well as T20242573.

7 Hello, my name is Sharlena Powell and as I said,  
8 I'm an identified and that's really important in the  
9 identification as a person with lived experience and  
10 subject matter expert on the intersection of domestic  
11 violence and homelessness. I've also been an  
12 advocate for social justice in ethical systems  
13 practices throughout New York City and in other  
14 cities across the United States.

15 So, I wanted to first start off with why I'm  
16 writing this testimony. The City Council rights and  
17 passes local laws that effect day to day rise of  
18 people living in, working in or visiting New York  
19 City. One of the things I'm very passionate about is  
20 amplifying the voices of survivors of domestic and  
21 gender based violence. People like myself uhm, and  
22 it's been a core driver in my professional career  
23 design and throughout my household lifetime among my  
24 new clear and expanded family composition.

25 Often limited and in need of greater investment.  
Many considered to be a vulnerable population of

1 domestic violence including communities of  
2 unaccompanied women, communities experiencing  
3 unsheltered homelessness.  
4

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time expired.

6 SHARLENA POWELL: I'm sorry.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time expired.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Can you wrap?

9 SHARLENA POWELL: Sure.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

11 SHARLENA POWELL: And also, if it helps I can  
12 submit my testimony if you'd like to go to the next  
13 person.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That would be perfect.

15 SHARLENA POWELL: Thank you very much for this  
16 opportunity.

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Okay, we're going  
18 to unmute Janyll Canals.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

20 JANYLL CANALS: Thank you for the opportunity to  
21 speak with you about supporting families in New York  
22 City shelters system who are survivors of domestic  
23 violence. My name is Janyll Canals and I am the  
24 Director of the Robinhood Project at Advocates for  
25 Children of New York. To fully support survivors of

1 domestic violence in the shelter systems, families  
2 need their children to be able to attend school and  
3 feel safe in their school communities. However,  
4 through our work with Sanctuary for Families and Safe  
5 Horizon, we have seen survivors in the shelter system  
6 face many barriers to accessing educational services  
7 for their children based on their housing status,  
8 their need for confidentiality, and the need for more  
9 school based supports. Students in shelters in  
10 grades K-6 are entitled to busing so that they don't  
11 have to transfer schools when placed in shelter.

12  
13 However, unlike students in DHS shelters,  
14 students in domestic violence shelters are not  
15 automatically provided with busing and there is often  
16 confusion about the responsibilities of school staff  
17 members and domestic violence shelter providers in  
18 arranging transportation and entering the  
19 confidential PO Box location needed for bus routing.  
20 This confusion often leads to delays, school  
21 absences, and ultimately unnecessary school transfers  
22 due to lack of timely transportation. Such confusion  
23 can also compromise the safety of families and their  
24 confidentiality.

3 Just last week, a school requested a confidential  
4 location from a shelter and a family even though the  
5 confidential address was not needed in order to  
6 provide busing. To better support survivors and  
7 their families, the city should encourage New York  
8 City public schools to implement the recommendations  
9 of the students in temporary housing transportation  
10 taskforce, including creating a protocol that clearly  
11 defines the rules and responsibilities of New York  
12 City public schools staff and shelter staff. We have  
13 also had cases where New York City public school  
14 staff has failed to update a student's profile to  
15 limit communication and contact with a potentially  
16 dangerous person.

17 Despite families providing documentation of  
18 domestic violence and requesting a notice prior to  
19 any disclosure of information -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
21 expired.

22 JANYLL CANALS: To close, we would encourage the  
23 city to recognize that supporting survivors in  
24 domestic violence, shelter - domestic violence in the  
25 shelter system also needs ensuring that New York City  
public schools are prepared to support these families



3 and have the systems in place in order to make sure  
4 children can attend school safely. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. We will now  
6 unmute Shani Adess.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

8 SHANI ADESS: Chair, Council Members, and Staff,  
9 thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is  
10 Shani Adess, I am one of the Vice Presidents at the  
11 New York Legal Assistance Group. I previously spent  
12 my entire career providing services to survivors of  
13 domestic violence.

14 We believe that one of the things most central to  
15 survivor services our role in expanding options for  
16 survivors. Years of isolation, coercion, take or  
17 attempt to take power away from a person. Our  
18 services should aim to give that power back. To do  
19 this, we need resources including shelters that are  
20 responsive to the needs of survivors and their  
21 families by being accessible and inclusive, and  
22 trauma informed. And that survivors across shelters  
23 have uniform and transparent rules and procedures  
24 they understand their rights and responsibilities.  
25 We do not have enough beds and spaces for domestic  
violence survivors in New York City right now. We

3 need more. We also need more spaces that aren't  
4 solely able to support cis-gender female survivors  
5 with young children.

6 Similarly survivors who have religious and  
7 dietary restrictions are most often not accommodated  
8 by the DV shelter system. Survivors who are calling  
9 our city's hotline being told there are no beds  
10 available, or none that fit them or their families'  
11 needs, limit the safety planning options a survivor  
12 may have when our goal is to expand it.

13 I've also had clients weigh accessing shelter due  
14 to not only the initial uprooting of themselves and  
15 their kids to move there, but also the ongoing risk  
16 of instability through constant shelter moves due to  
17 the time limits. There is not enough affordable  
18 housing in New York City. Survivors, especially  
19 those who are low income, who might have experienced  
20 financial abuse or who are relying on our protracted  
21 systems like our courts to obtain support or access  
22 to assets need time.

23 If entering our shelter 180 days, in they yet  
24 again must change schools, jobs, find new resources  
25 for services whether for counseling or a child's  
special education or medical needs, there's a

1 chilling effect to be able to enter the shelter  
2 system.

3  
4 In addition, we know that the lack of  
5 transparency and uniformity shelter rules is a huge  
6 problem. This means limited access to reasonable  
7 accommodations, which aren't determined by a  
8 centralized source but sent shelter to shelter.

9 We also strongly believe that shelter should be  
10 mandated to provide and publicly post shelter rules  
11 in residents preferred languages. As people who may  
12 be complying with court orders -

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time expired.

14 SHANI ADESS: Uhm are not able to return without  
15 risking expulsion. Thank you so much. We'll expand  
16 on this in our written testimony and thank you for  
17 calling this hearing today.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. We will now call  
19 Debbie Donastorg.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

21 DEBBIE DONASTORG: Thank you. Thank you Chair  
22 Ayala and Chair Louis. My name is Debbe Donastorg,  
23 and I am the Program Director of Safe Homes Project,  
24 a Community Based Domestic Violence program under  
25 Good Shepherd Services. We operate, our location is

3 in the Park Slope Brooklyn and we also have staffing  
4 at the Brooklyn Family Justice Center.

5 I guess I want to hit on a couple of points. You  
6 know the program works closely with the Family  
7 Justice Center in Brooklyn, receiving anywhere  
8 between five and six referrals daily and our  
9 referrals come from a loaner including DV and  
10 homeless shelters and some of the challenges that  
11 we're seeing or the families that we're seeing are  
12 experiencing the lack of obviously a lack of  
13 affordable housing. Access to translation and  
14 languages services, access to child care so families  
15 can follow up with their appointments and you know  
16 and seek employment. There is very limited access to  
17 immigration information and legal support. There's  
18 busing concerns when families are in shelter. And  
19 also, one of the very important parts of this also  
20 challenge is that there's lack of trauma informed  
21 support for shelter staff. Staffing shelters need to  
22 be trained in trauma informed care to best support  
23 their work. Considering that often you know staff  
24 are credible messengers and survivors dealing with  
25 vicarious drama and this is really critical. And  
it's critical to invest in programs and support for

1  
2 the shelters that are supporting domestic violence  
3 survivors and their families in New York City system.

4 As always programs such as Safe Homes Project,  
5 which is extending that support to outside shelter,  
6 outside of the shelter system itself. And I want to  
7 thank you for the opportunity to testify and if  
8 there's any questions. I will also submit our  
9 testimony.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. We will now  
11 unmute Danielle Emery.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

13 DANIELLE EMERY: Good afternoon Council Members.  
14 My name is Danielle Emery. I am the Director of the  
15 People and Animals Living Safely or PALS program at  
16 Urban Resource Institute.

17 PALS welcome survivors of domestic violence into  
18 10 of URI's 15 DV shelters, serving more than 100  
19 heads of households and close to 150 animals per  
20 year. URI was the first shelter provider in New York  
21 City to welcome pets into our facilities and 11 years  
22 later, we are among a handful of organizations that  
23 provide this service. Multiple studies have shown  
24 that 50 percent of survivors state they will not  
25 leave an abusive situation if they cannot bring their

1  
2 pets with them. Survivors facing all types of  
3 crisis, including natural disasters, see their pets  
4 as family members. People will not access shelter,  
5 evacuate or seek safety if it means separating from  
6 their pets.

7 Shelter needs to be accessible to survivors and  
8 their entire family, animals included. Many  
9 survivors choose to obtain emotional support animal  
10 documentation to access shelter and stay together  
11 with their pets through protection provided by the  
12 Fair Housing Act. They must then fill out paperwork  
13 and wait 10 to 14 days for a DHS determination as to  
14 whether their ESA will be allowed into shelter. This  
15 wait is more frequently closer to one month.

16 This is not a reasonable amount of time to ask a  
17 person in crisis to make alternate care arrangements  
18 for a beloved family member. All shelters should be  
19 accommodating of pets to reduce barriers to safety  
20 and increase access to shelter. New York City has  
21 also not done enough to help single survivors of  
22 domestic violence with pets. This is by far the  
23 largest group we hear from among the nearly 500  
24 people who contact us each year seeking shelter with  
25 their animals.

3 If singles are able to access DV shelter, their  
4 time in that system is tightly monitored and the vast  
5 majority are not able to find permanent housing  
6 before being discharged. The expectation that these  
7 clients will go to DHS single assessment centers but  
8 this is not an option for those pets - for those with  
9 pets for even with approved ESA's.

10 Most singles we assist through the PALS program  
11 end up returning to their abusers or other unsafe  
12 situations. The New York City Shelter system creates  
13 significant barriers for people whose pets -

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time expired.

15 DANIELLE EMERY: May be one of the few sources of  
16 love during their toughest times. We will submit  
17 some recommendations with our written testimony and I  
18 thank you for your time and consideration.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Our final  
20 panelist I don't see him online but we'll call him  
21 anyway. Steven DeCastro.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Steven DeCastro. Okay, it  
24 doesn't appear as though he is online. At this  
25 moment, so with that, we have now heard from everyone  
who has signed up to testify. If we have

1  
2 inadvertently missed anyone who would like to testify  
3 in person, please visit the Sergeants table and  
4 complete an appearance card now. We are making a  
5 final call for Zoom registrants who have not yet  
6 spoken. Okay, if we inadvertently missed anyone who  
7 would like to testify virtually, please use the raise  
8 hand function in Zoom and I will call on you in the  
9 order the hands were raised.

10 Seeing no one else, I would like to take note -  
11 to note that written testimony, which will be  
12 reviewed in full by Committee Staff may be submitted  
13 to the record for up to 72 hours after the close of  
14 this hearing by email. You can email it to  
15 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

16 And with that, this hearing is concluded.  
17 [GAVEL]. Thank you all.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date October 27, 2024