

COMMITTEE ON AGING

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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December 3, 2021
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HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 1)

B E F O R E: Hon. Margaret Chin, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Tiffany Cabán
Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Eric Dinowitz
Mathieu Eugene
Mark Treyger
Paul A. Vallone

A P P E A R A N C E S

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez,
Commissioner of the New York City Department for the
Aging

Jocelyn Groden,
Associate Commissioner for Social and Direct Services
of the New York City Department for the Aging

Ygnacio Silvestre,
Director of the Assigned Counsel Project

Ahmed Tigani,
Deputy Commissioner Office of Neighborhood Strategies

Sideya Sherman,
NYCHA Executive Vice President of Community
Engagement and Partnerships

Matthew Charney,
NYCHA Vice President of Design and Construction

Katelyn Andrews,
Director of Public Policy, LiveOn NY

Alexander Ryley,
Director of Elder Law Civil Practice at The Legal Aid
Society

Kevin Jones,
Associate State Director for Advocacy at AARP New
York

Chris Widelo,
Director of External Affairs at The New York State
Association for Affordable Housing

Joseph Condon,
The Community Housing Improvement Program

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SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Computer recording started.

SERGEANT BRADLEY: Cloud has started.

SERGEANT PEREZ: Back up is rolling.

SERGEANT BRADLEY: Okay.

UNKNOWN: Alright.

SERGEANT BRADLEY: Alright, uh, good afternoon, well, good morning, and welcome to today's New York City hearing on Aging. At this time will panelist please turn on your videos?

To minimize disruptions, can you place all electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode?

If you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov, again that is testimony@council.nyc.gov.

Thank you for your cooperation

Chair you may begin.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. **[GAVEL]**

Good morning, I am Council Member Margaret Chin, Chair of the City Council's Committee on Aging. And, welcome to today's hearing.

Today the committee on conduct a hearing on housing New York City seniors. But, before we get in to our topic today, I want to recognize that this is the last Aging Committee Hearing of this legislative

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2 session. And, in honor of this final hearing, I'd
3 like to review some highlights of what we have all
4 been able to accomplish these last four years.

5 As Chair of the Aging Committee during this
6 session my goal was to build on the tremendous
7 momentum we've gained from the Year of Senior in
8 fiscal year 2018.

9 Some of the budget highlights over the four
10 fiscal years, that, we, as a council negotiated with
11 the administration include reflecting the commitment
12 for model budgeting in the financial plan -- which
13 includes \$15 million in baseline funding for
14 Congregate Meals at senior centers, baseline funding
15 for the creation of new NORCS as part of the
16 community care plan; \$5 million to address the
17 digital divide for seniors, one-time funding to
18 increase the home delivered meal rate, and
19 continuously advocating for the restoration of NYCHA
20 Senior Centers that were slated to be closed.

21 Additionally, as Chair, I am proud to boast the
22 growth in senior services' council initiative funding
23 -- starting at \$24 million in fiscal year 2019, and
24 increasing it to \$31.7 million in 2022.

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With this funding the council demonstrated its commitment to funding the case management wait list, senior centers, including immigrant senior centers, NORCS, elder abuse prevention, holocaust survivors social adult daycare, and many more initiative.

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During my time as Chair of the Committee on Aging, DFTA'S budget has more than doubled, growing a 114 percent between fiscal year 2014 and 2022.

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I am hopeful that the achievements made over these last eight years, in advocating for more funding for seniors will continue in to the next session with the next administration.

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In addition to budget victories, the last four years have been busy legislatively as well. Through a partnership with the state, I was able to pass legislation to extend the increased income threshold for The Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption and Disability Rent Increase Exemption -- known as SCRIE and DRIE -- to June 30, 2022, insuring that thousands of New Yorkers will be able to have their rent frozen and remain in their homes.

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I am also proud of the work of this committee tackling workplace discrimination. And, I have the

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2 honor of sponsoring several bills to have passed to
3 address this persuasive issue.

4 These bills include: creating The Center for
5 Older Adult Workforce Development, an office
6 dedicated to combatting ageism in the workplace, and
7 to developing the older workforce; as well as
8 requiring the New York City Commission on Human
9 Rights to conduct a two-year study related to age
10 discrimination in the workplace.

11 Thanks to the leadership of my fellow committee
12 member, Council Member Diana Ayala, we also passed
13 legislation requiring case workers providing services
14 as senior centers to complete the Mental Health First
15 Aid Training Course for older adults -- ensuring that
16 mental health of seniors seeking services is not
17 ignored.

18 The last two years have been clouded by the
19 COVID-19 pandemic, yet the council did not lose its
20 focus and ensured that seniors were not forgotten
21 during this pandemic.

22 In addition to the various hearings on home
23 delivered meals, service provided to seniors, and
24 nonprofit contracts during the pandemic, this
25 committee also ensured the passage of legislation

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2 sponsored by Council Member Mark Treyger establishing
3 a COVID-19 vaccination plan for homebound seniors.

4 These are not the only accompaniments of the last
5 four years, but there is not enough time to list them
6 all. I am so proud of the work I have been able to
7 accomplish with my colleagues on this committee, and
8 I want to thank them for their dedication to the
9 city's seniors. I appreciate the providers who are
10 committed to serving the aging community and the
11 unfailing advocates who fight for the rights of
12 seniors every day.

13 I also want to thank Commissioner Lorraine
14 Cortés-Vázquez and her colleagues at the
15 administration for partnering with me throughout the
16 years to ensure that the needs of older adults are
17 acknowledged and addressed.

18 Now, to return to the topic of the agenda today.
19 Senior housing and the city need to reach this
20 population across all five boroughs. It's paramount.
21 Many live on fixed incomes and are often rent
22 burdened even for those enrolled in programs to
23 freeze their rent.

24 Seniors are more likely to spend in excess of 30
25 percent of their income on housing than the total

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2 population whether the rent on own. And, in 2015,
3 about one-third of seniors receiving SCRIE pay 70
4 percent of their income on rent.

5 While DFTA is not involved with the construction
6 of senior affordable housing, the agency does offer
7 certain programs to help seniors afford their housing
8 needs. For example, the agency partners with the New
9 York Foundation for Senior Citizens to operate a home
10 sharing program for older adults.

11 The home sharing program pairs individuals age 60
12 or older with other older adults, younger adults, or
13 developmentally disabled individuals in to homes
14 owned by a nonprofit organization or an individual.

15 DFTA also partners with legal providers across
16 five boroughs to offer older adults free legal
17 services, including services related to
18 landlord/tenant issues. Additionally, in partnership
19 with the civil court of the City of New York DFTA
20 operates The Assigned Counsel Project for individual
21 age 60 and older. ACP provides eligible older adults
22 with a social worker and lawyer who assists them with
23 their housing court cases.

24 Today the committee would like to explore the
25 realities of seniors who are facing losing their

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2 homes, challenges facing seniors in keeping their
3 homes, and what reasonable accommodation can and
4 should be provided by all housing developments to
5 help seniors live in different housing.

6 The committee would also like an update on the
7 home sharing program and how the city can improve
8 participation for this program.

9 Thank you to the advocates and members of the
10 public who are joining us today. And, thank you to
11 the representatives from the administration for
12 joining us. And, I look forward to hearing from you
13 on these critical issues.

14 At this time, I'd like to acknowledge my
15 colleagues who have joined us today. Uh, I know that
16 we have been joined by Council Member Brooks -
17 Powers, Council Member Dinowitz, and Council Member
18 Vallone.

19 I would also like to thank, uh, my staff Kana
20 Ervin, and Aging Committee staff Crystal Pond, Aliyah
21 Reynolds, and Daniel Kroop for helping to organize
22 this hearing today.

23 Now, I am going to turn back to our moderator,
24 Policy Analyst Aliyah Reynolds to go over some
25 procedural items. Thank you.

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2 MODERATOR: Thank you, Chair. I'm Aliyah Reynolds
3 Policy Analyst to The Aging Committee.

4 Before we begin testimony, I want to remind
5 everyone that you will be on mute until you are
6 called on testify, at which point you will be
7 unmuted.

8 Members of the administration who are testifying
9 will not be muted during the Q&A portion of admin
10 testimony. I will be calling in public witnesses to
11 testify after the conclusion of the administration's
12 testimony and council member questions, so please
13 listed for your name to be called.

14 All hearing participants should submit written
15 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov if you have
16 not already done so. The deadline for submitting
17 written testimony for the record is 72 hours after
18 this hearing.

19 I will now call on the following members of the
20 administration to testify: Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez -
21 Commissioner of The Department of Aging, Jocelyn
22 Groden DFTA Associate Commissioner, Ygnacio Silvestre
23 - DFTA Director of Assigned Counsel Project, Ahmed
24 Tigani - HPD Deputy Commissioner Office of
25 Neighborhood Strategies, Sideya Sherman - NYCHA

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Executive Vice President of Community Engagement and

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Partnerships, and Matthew Charney - NYCHA Vice

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President of Design and Construction.

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Before we begin testimony, I will administer the

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oath to all members of the administration who will be

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offering testimony or will be available for

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questions.

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Please raise your right hand. I will read the

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oath, and then call on each of you individually for a

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response.

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Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,

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and nothing by the truth, before this committee, and

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to respond honestly to council member questions?

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Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez?

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I do.

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MODERATOR: Associate Commissioner Groden?

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ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GRODEN: I do.

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MODERATOR: Director Ygnacio Silvestre?

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DIRECTOR SILVESTRE: I do.

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MODERATOR: Deputy Commissioner Tigani?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: I do.

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MODERATOR: V. P. Sherman?

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V. P. SHERMAN: (No Response)

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MODERATOR: Can we please just unmute Sideya

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Sherman, please?

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V. P. SHERMAN: Can you hear me?

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MODERATOR: Yes.

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V. P. SHERMAN: Oh, I do.

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MODERATOR: Thank you.

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And, last V. P. Charney?

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V. P. CHARNEY: I do.

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MODERATOR: Thank you.

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Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez, you may begin your

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testimony.

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you very much.

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Good morning, Chairperson Chin and members of the

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Committee on Aging. As it's been noted, I am Lorraine

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Cortés- Vázquez, Commissioner of the New York City

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Department for the Aging. I am joined today by

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Jocelyn Groden, The Associate Commissioner for Social

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and Direct Services and Ygnacio Silvestre, Director

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of the Assigned Counsel Project. I am also joined by

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my colleagues Ahmed Tigani, Deputy Commissioner for

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Neighborhood Strategies at the New York City

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Department of Housing Preservation and Development,

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and Sideya Sherman, The Executive Vice President of

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Community Engagement & Partnerships, as well as

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2 Matthew Charney, uh, The Vice President of Design &
3 Construction at The New York City Housing Authority.

4 I am prepared to discuss the topic of senior
5 housing, which you said earlier, Chairwoman Chin,
6 that is addressed by multiple agencies. And, The
7 Department for The Aging relies on the referrals to
8 other agencies and appreciates the support and
9 partnership that we have developed both with, uh,
10 NYCHA as well as HPD.

11 Consistent with the departments overarching goal
12 of making New York City age-inclusive, the 5-year
13 Community Care Plan released earlier this year
14 provides an innovative roadmap for meeting the needs
15 of a growing and diversifying older adult population.
16 This plan centers on the supports that allows older
17 adults to safely age in place. In addition to in-home
18 and community services, having a stable place to live
19 is imperative to the success of this plan. While
20 housing is a challenge for all New Yorkers, it is
21 especially challenging for older adults living on
22 fixed incomes particularly to find an affordable
23 place to live as you have cited earlier, uh,
24 Chairwoman.

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Again, DFTA's priority is to provide the services and resources that older adults need to remain in their homes. This includes in-home services such as case management, home care, home delivered meals, friendly visiting, and social supports and community services like geriatric mental health services, older adult centers, senior employment, caregiver support programs, elder abuse and crime victim services that work to meet the individual needs of older adults and their families.

By way of background, DFTA services are provided through a network of services and partnerships, with nonprofit providers. DFTA also provides some direct support and resources that help older adults remain in their communities. While all eligible adults can access services, there is an increased priority to service provision and outreach in TRIE neighborhoods. That is a commitment that this administration has made. These neighborhoods, as we all know, were disproportionately impacted by COVID due to underlying the historic disparities which need to be address holistically through all city services and which DFTA has taken very, very seriously.

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2 For example, DFTA operates NY Connects which is
3 a state-wide system that helps connect individuals
4 with long-term services and supports, such as
5 providing individuals with a detailed overview and
6 eligibility requirements of the multiple types of
7 housing available to New Yorkers. Through multiple
8 programs, and through Aging Connect hotline, DFTA
9 supports addressing and accessing entitlements,
10 referrals for rental assistance programs,
11 applications for 202 housing and SCRIE or DRIE in
12 addition to many other entitlements and benefits.

13 And finally, DFTA's Minor Residential Repairs
14 Program is a small but essential component in DFTA's
15 portfolio of services aimed at assisting older adults
16 in their homes. Through this program, older adults
17 who own their homes, condos, co-ops and some renters,
18 they can be connected to free home maintenance and
19 minor repair services.

20 As you know, DFTA, and you mentioned earlier,
21 uhm, DFTA also supports the home sharing program,
22 which is run by the New York Foundation for Senior
23 Citizens. That was their brilliant inception and
24 innovation years ago. Uh, the foundation created a
25 response to, uhm, addressing housing needs. And, we

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2 call this a boutique program, because it is unique
3 and sized to provide individual and personalized
4 service to a select number of older adults. Through
5 this program, the New York Foundation of Senior
6 Citizens matches pairs "hosts" who have extra private
7 spaces in their houses or apartments to share with
8 responsible, compatible guests seeking housing. At
9 least one of the participants must be age 60 or over.
10 These matches are mutually beneficial. In addition to
11 the financial and housing stability this provides,
12 the matches also support some intergenerational,
13 relationship building, they also reduce isolation,
14 and increase social well-being.

15 DFTA's work with our sister agencies is paramount
16 to helping older adults maintain special stable
17 housing. We have spent the last year, in particular,
18 developing our relationship with HPD to more
19 seamlessly share information. DFTA's training team
20 has been in contact with HPD and has set up a series
21 of meetings where we share information on how to
22 access social services as well as to familiarize
23 themselves with the aging services network, and how
24 to work within HPD's Senior Affordable Rental
25 Apartments Program -- SARA -- and their NORCs to see

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2 if there are ideas that can serve as models that
3 might benefit each other. We are also in the process
4 of setting up trainings from HPD for DFTA's Aging
5 Connect staff and some providers to learn more about
6 Housing Connect to best support older adults seeking
7 this assistance.

8 Moreover, we have a strong relationship with the
9 Mayor's Office of Tenant Protection and use them to
10 inform DFTA staff and our network of providers
11 regarding the rights and opportunities to file for
12 things like filing for the Emergency Rental
13 Assistance Program and accessing the Tenant Helpline.
14 Finally, we work closely with Adult Protective
15 services to support clients who have more complex
16 needs around navigating housing issues and threats of
17 eviction.

18 All of that, uh, Chairman, to say, is why we
19 think DFTA's partnerships are essential and
20 integrating aging in to all of the key city agencies
21 is key. Which is why we're still promoting and
22 endorsing the concept of an Aging Cabinet.

23 Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, or
24 NORCs, are residential locations that are not age-
25 restricted, nor built for seniors, but over time have

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2 become home to a significant concentration of older
3 residents. Due to the rate of growth of the older
4 population in New York City, it won't be long before
5 every community in New York City could be considered
6 a NORC. These developments support older adults aging
7 in place, but do not guarantee affordability.

8 There are two types of NORCs. A classic NORC is
9 an area comprising a single building or a housing
10 development and a Neighborhood NORC; it is a
11 geographically defined neighborhood larger than a
12 small cluster of buildings.

13 DFTA provides support and oversight to the social
14 services that are provided at NORCs. Across the City,
15 DFTA funds services for 28 NORCs, and there are an
16 additional 32 NORCs that received funds directly from
17 the State and/or discretionary funding from NYC
18 Councilmembers.

19 Eleven of those NORCs are located within a NYCHA
20 development. Through the RFP, we plan to have an
21 overwhelmingly majority of NORCs located in a
22 community district that has been a TRIE neighborhood.

23 NORCs have core components built in to facilitate
24 aging in place. Some of these services include case
25 management, case assistance, and health care

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2 management. Through health promotion services, older
3 adults also have access to activities that promote a
4 better understanding and awareness of healthy
5 lifestyle habits. Many NORCs offer other services
6 such as education and recreation programs, chore
7 assistance, friendly visiting, housekeeping, escorts
8 and transportation, and some nursing.

9 DFTA's network of providers act as a safety net
10 to help older adults maintain stable housing. Through
11 partnerships with programs and agencies, DFTA works
12 to share information and educate others about
13 programs and supports older adults might be eligible
14 for which would allow them to maintain their current
15 housing, and eviction protection is one of the things
16 that we really work hard on.

17 Some of these partnerships include Adult
18 Protective Services, legal service providers, help
19 accessing emergency rental assistance and the Mayor's
20 Office of Tenant Protection.

21 Case management agencies, older adult centers and
22 DFTA's elder abuse program and caregiver program are
23 often the front line for many older adults, and they
24 work with older adults to access needed services and
25 resource to preserve housing.

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2 The Assigned Counsel Project is something we're
3 also proud of. DFTA supports older adults remaining
4 in their homes through the Assigned Counsel Project.
5 This is a collaborative effort between DFTA, The
6 Human Resources Administration's Office of the Civil
7 Justice, and the New York State Civil Court Access to
8 Justice Program.

9 This program aims to preserve long term tenancy
10 and assist older adults in obtaining the services
11 that will allow them to remain safe in their home and
12 community. This program pairs social service
13 assistance, provided by DFTA, with legal services,
14 provided by HRA's OCJ, to protect older adults from
15 eviction. ACP conducts home visits to assess living
16 conditions and works with clients to obtain benefits
17 and entitlements which make apartments more
18 affordable, and advocates in court to prevent
19 evictions in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Through this
20 program, thousands have been kept safe and secure in
21 their homes.

22 As you may guess, older adults most often find
23 themselves in housing court facing eviction due to
24 nonpayment of rent. In these cases, ACP works with
25 these individuals to identify what is going on and

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2 how to address it long term. This often includes
3 helping them apply for a one-shot deal, SCRIE and
4 other benefits and entitlements such as Medicare and
5 SNAP. By reducing monthly expenses, older adults are
6 often able to afford their housing costs going
7 forward. There is also a great need arising in the
8 area of hoarding. In these cases, living conditions
9 are posing environmental and health hazard not only
10 to the older adult themselves but to other residents.
11 ACP is working to prioritize these challenging cases.

12 Recently, ACP was able to assist an older adult
13 in their late 60's who was temporarily removed from
14 his apartment due to a vacate order by the Department
15 of Buildings. Sadly, the older adult ended up
16 residing in a single-room occupancy housing for over
17 a year. ACP, in collaboration with Adult Protective
18 Services, was able to assist in providing heavy-duty
19 cleaning and decluttering of the client's apartment.
20 DOB then expedited the inspection and lifted the
21 vacate order. That is the city at its best -- working
22 collaboratively around aging issues. We are happy to
23 report that Mr. X is back in his apartment. This
24 process could take months, however, in this case,
25 through our intervention and collaboration with our

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2 sister agencies the process took less than 60 days.
3 This is a perfect example of how collaboration
4 between city agencies is paramount in assisting our
5 older, vulnerable adults.

6 Again, I will unabashedly plug the need for an
7 Aging Cabinet.

8 In addition, our partners at HPD have accelerated
9 the construction and preservation of affordable
10 housing to levels not seen in 30 years through the
11 Mayor's Housing New York plan.

12 Since 2014, the City has financed 195,000
13 affordable homes and apartments as of June 2021, 65
14 percent of which serve very low-income individuals
15 making less than roughly \$42,000 per year. This
16 housing is available to all New Yorkers, including
17 older adults who built this city and would like to
18 remain here.

19 Recognizing that older adults are more likely to
20 be low-income, rent-burdened, and live on a fixed
21 income than other city residents, HPD introduced new
22 programs to build more housing dedicated to seniors,
23 identify a pipeline of underused public sites to
24 create new senior housing, make more of the existing
25 housing stock accessible to older adults and people

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2 with disabilities, and provide low-cost loans and
3 individualized assistance to low-income homeowners.
4 As a result, last fiscal year, the City set a record
5 for senior housing.

6 HPD is using a wide range of measures, to ensure
7 that older adults can stay in their homes and
8 communities as they age, and to include and create
9 inclusive neighborhoods for older adults and people
10 with disabilities.

11 In exchange for HPD funds, regulatory protections
12 or a longer term for existing protections are
13 required to ensure that rent remains affordable for
14 existing residents. Simple changes can make staying
15 in one's home a viable, safer option and create a
16 more accessible city for all New Yorkers.

17 Therefore, HPD-funded rehabilitation projects are
18 now required to include accessibility improvements
19 identified through an enhanced building physical
20 needs assessment. This holistic review not only
21 identifies basic building system needs, like a roof
22 or heating system, but also building-wide
23 improvements to help older adults age safely in their
24 homes. In addition to this building- wide assessment,
25 HPD has several programs such as Aging in Place and

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2 HomeFix that assist with home modifications and
3 repairs. That is the gift of trying to make sure
4 that we have universal design that helps all families
5 -- in particular to older adults. And, we're very
6 grateful for HPD's partnership.

7 In conclusion, each of New York's older adults
8 deserves and requires resources and support so they
9 can live and thrive in the communities that they
10 built in this city, in the communities where they
11 raised their families, the communities that they have
12 called home for more than 40 years at times.

13 As an advocate for older adults, I am mindful
14 that our priority is to keep older adults safely in
15 their homes. With the realization of the 5-year
16 Community Care Plan, many of these supports would be
17 provided, but the housing itself is imperative. I
18 appreciate the work of our sister agencies who have
19 worked tirelessly to make sure that older adults have
20 access to senior housing.

21 The City Council has also been a constant ally
22 and partner in ensuring that older adults have a
23 dignified quality of life. I appreciate that, and I
24 appreciate your leadership, Council Member Chin.

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As the year ends, your term in council ends. I would be remiss if I didn't, yet again, thank you profusely for the hard work and advocacy that you have provided to older adults throughout your tenure. You highlighted some of the accomplishments that and the committee have provided. You have been a stalwart ally, we have been able to accomplish many great things together and the lives of older adults and make them better for it because of you. I thank you.

But, before this hearing ends, I want to acknowledge that I have yet to formally respond to your letter, uh, Chairwoman Chin, concerning the rate for home delivered meals. And, I haven't done so, because I didn't have a final answer. I'm pleased to report that in close coordination with the budget director, Jiha (sp?) and the staunch advocacy of our Deputy Mayor Hertzog, DFTA in partnership with OMB, will be increasing the per meal rate for home delivered meals to \$10.68 per meal starting January 1, 2022, and then again to \$11.78 per meal starting July 1, 2022.

As you know, as one of the strongest advocates and voices out there, this has been raised by the

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2 committee over and over in all of the months that I
3 have been part of this, uhm, and I'm sure before
4 that. So, I want to again thank you, Chairwoman
5 Chin, for your unwavering commitment to homebound
6 older adults who remain among the most vulnerable New
7 Yorkers. But, I would be remiss not to acknowledge
8 our home delivered meals provider network, and in
9 particular, Ben Thomas of Queens Community House, who
10 has been one of strongest allies and voice in this
11 area, and Jeremy Kaplan of Encore Community Services
12 who has testified before this committee asking for
13 additional support, and Rabi Wiener of Jewish
14 Community Council of Greater Coney Island. Strong
15 voices, persistent, unflinching, unflappable voices.
16 And, we're able to say that today, their voices were
17 heard, and the city is making a commitment to
18 increasing the home delivered meals per meal costs.

19 So, our formal response to your letter is
20 forthcoming, Chairwoman Chin. And that concludes...

21 (Cross-Talk)

22 MODERATOR: Thank you, Commissioner Cortés-
23 Vázquez... (Cross-Talk)

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: My testimony.

25 MODERATOR: Thank you.

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Before I turn to Chair Chin for questions, I'd like to remind council members to please use the Raise Hand function in Zoom to indicate that you have a question. Uh, please remember to keep questions and answers to five minutes. Uhm, panelist from the administration, please stay unmuted if possible during this question and answer period.

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I'll now turn it over to you, Chair Chin.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, uh, we also have

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been joined Council Member Ayala and Council Member

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Eugene.

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And, thank you, uh, Commissioner, for your

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testimony, and for that bit of good news at the end!

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So, I don't have to ask that question. But, what is

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the total... I do have to... Like, what is the

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total amount of money that's allocated for this meal

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increase?

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I going to have to

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get back to you. I have to do the math. It...

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Because... (Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Is that \$16.6?

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's probably

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somewhere... No, it's not quite \$16.6, but, uh, it's

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somewhere in that ballpark, because if you figure

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2 that we're doing 25,000 meals a day, and, uh, you do
3 the \$10.68 -- whatever the differential is between
4 the \$9.58 and the \$10.68. So, we'll give you that
5 number, uhm, right after the hearing. I thought I
6 did not want to not give you the news. And, I'll
7 give you... I'll give you... I'll give you the
8 details, uhm, of precisely the amount of it reflects.
9 Okay?

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, I've... I've been
11 asking, because I heard the, you know, the November
12 plan was out. And, uh, I was hoping for good news.
13 So, thank you!

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I'm sure (INAUDIBLE
16 00:36:46)... (Cross-Talk)

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE 00:36:47)
18 and it will be reflected in, I guess, the January
19 plan. Right? I... (Cross-Talk)

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: (INAUDIBLE 00:36:51)...
21 (Cross-Talk)

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You know better than
23 I do. But, that's... That's the commitment.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: That's great. That is really
25 great news. I'm so happy about that.

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Uh, I am going to start with a couple of questions, and then I am going to turn to my colleagues if they have questions, you know, please raise your hand so that, uh, we will know to call on you.

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So, Commissioner , you talked about the home sharing program, so, can you provide some update numbers on how many matches were made in fiscal year 2021? Uhm... (Cross-Talk)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, as of...

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(Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: (INAUDIBLE 00:37:25) only like ten matches as of April.

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, as of April 21, there were ten matches. As mentioned, the pandemic... (Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah.

19

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Affected many programs including this one. Anxiety around sharing your home with someone -- it was hard for many older adults. So, last year, the program housed 32 individuals, uh, through 16 matches. So far, the first month, uh, the first five months of this year, 22 people have been housed through 11 matches. This

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2 is above the target for this point in the year.

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3 Overall the program is currently housing 78 people

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4 though 39 matches. Uhm, and so that's... That's

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5 where we're at. And, those... We're looking at the

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6 pre-pandemic numbers to keep that... keep those as

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7 benchmarks.

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8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I think one of the

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9 barriers has been that we've heard from the agency

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10 and from the advocates was, like, the rent is very

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11 high. I mean, the rent is not, uh, low that someone

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12 could afford without some kind of city subsidy.

12

13 So, are there any, uh, thinking behind, like, how

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14 do we kind of improve this program? How can we, uh,

14

15 (INAUDIBLE 00:38:48)... (Cross-Talk)

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16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You know... (Cross-

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17 Talk)

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18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: recruit more hosts that...

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19 that will charge less for rent? Because, I... I saw

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20 the list myself. I mean, even in Manhattan, of

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21 course it's high, but even other boroughs. So, if

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22 you're asking someone to pay over a \$1,000 a month

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23 just to share a room?

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24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, yeah, and

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25 affordability is something that the New York

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1
2 Foundation looks at regularly. And, uh, and, you
3 know, we could not have had a better visionary and
4 partner than the New York Foundation in this program.
5 They're constantly, uh, working hard to come up with
6 new outreach strategies, uhm, and they're seriously
7 looking at some kind of core sharing for the rental
8 costs. But, I really want to focus on what the main
9 priorities of this program are. It, one, it never
10 was an answer to housing, uh, to address severe
11 housing needs.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: But, it was just to
14 make sure that we had a supplement to any of the...
15 All of the options that we had though, this option
16 should be explored.

17 But, it also has a, not only a home, uh, a home,
18 uh, stability, but it also an income support program.
19 Because, many older adult homeowners may have
20 mortgages, second mortgages -- they've refinanced,
21 and find themselves, you know, with income insecurity
22 to maintain and retain their home. So, having a home
23 sharing guest helps that. So, it's really the
24 tenants, the homeowner... I'm sorry, it is the
25 homeowner, the condo owner that looks at their

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2 financial need and addresses it that way. Uhm, so
3 that ,you know, and I know that Linda Hoffman has
4 been a stalwart advocate in looking for ways to
5 supplement some of that, so that it doesn't become
6 unaffordable for the tenant and still not so
7 inexpensive that it doesn't help the homeowner
8 maintain the cost. So, it is this... this balance
9 that we're, uh, always, uh, looking at. And, it's,
10 uh, you know, it's the kind of stuff that... And,
11 this is why we call it a boutique program, because so
12 much assessment and, uh, review has to go in from
13 both the economic side for the homeowner as well the
14 safety side of both. But, we also know that there's
15 so many other benefits to this. But, it's one of the
16 issues that Linda Hoffman and us have been looking at
17 and trying to come up with ways to address that.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I remember, you know, in
19 past hearings and also talking to Linda to see if
20 there is kind of a city subsidy that could be
21 provided with these. You know, whether like the
22 voucher program could be utilized for that. You
23 know, those among the immigrant population are more
24 likely to be rent burdened. So, how does DFTA do
25 outreach on housing services that are available to

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2 this population? What are the... the languages that
3 DFTA offers in terms of this housing service?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, DFTA, uh, all
5 our housing referrals like all of our services are
6 done in multiple languages, uhm, including Spanish,
7 Mandarin, Hattian, Creole, uhm, Russian, uhm, and
8 there's several other languages that we provide
9 services in. But, Aging Connects has a... also has
10 a translation line that is used. And, uhm, and then
11 we also rely a lot on HPD for their outreach
12 service... with their outreach services. So, the
13 immigrant populations' language needs are addressed
14 by both agencies. But, Ahmed?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: Yeah, I would be
16 happy to add to that Commissioner.

17 So, uh, as I've mentioned in other hearings
18 before, and as the agency has made clear, language
19 access is critical. It's the way we connect people,
20 uh, this available affordable housing. We have three
21 contracts in place both for telephone services,
22 documents, uh, translations, and in-person
23 translation services. In addition, we work with a
24 variety of housing ambassadors across the five
25 boroughs that represent the diversity of this city

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2 that we live in. And they help us by being direct
3 connectors and also informing us how to make sure our
4 materials are accessible to them as well as those,
5 uh, and working very closely with MOPD to make sure
6 that those with disabilities or impediments can also
7 access and use our services -- both if you are a
8 tenant in place and you need a range of services from
9 tenant protection or assistance or how to make sure
10 you can stay in place, to accessing Housing Connect
11 either online digitally or getting a paper
12 application, uh, or any of the other new construction
13 housing opportunities that the city offers.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So....

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: And, we, as I
16 understand it, our materials are printed in about 17
17 different languages. Uh, and I don't have the list
18 of those exact languages now, but the number is 17.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, and I think
20 our number is just slightly below that maybe, uh, 14?
21 Uh, and I don't have the list for that, but we can...
22 I can provide that to you.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, it's the... For seniors
24 who are applying for affordable housing, uh, you were
25 talking about Ambassador Program, so does DFTA have a

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2 relationship with the HPD Housing Ambassador Program?

3 And with partner, uh, which partners with community
4 based organizations to provide assistance? Does DFTA
5 know about the Ambassador Program and all the CBOs
6 that are contracted from this program... for this
7 program?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I... Yes, we are.
9 And, uhm, I will turn to Assistant Committee on
10 Groden so she can talk a little bit about how that
11 partnership manifests itself or to Deputy
12 Commissioner, uh, Ahmed Tigani, so that he can, uh,
13 amplify that.

14 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GRODEN: Thank you,
15 Commissioner, I'll start if you'd like.

16 As mentioned, many of our programs act as the
17 frontline to older adults. As such, they're trained
18 in housing referrals among many other things. And,
19 when an appropriate provider, such as case management
20 agencies assist clients with the applications
21 themselves. DFTA is currently in the process of
22 setting up a Housing Ambassador training for many of
23 our contracted agencies in DFTA's frontline staff.
24 We are awaiting the date of the next training.
25 Through this training, staff will be trained directly

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2 on Housing Connect to be able to better understand
3 the system and better partner with the HPD to access
4 these supports.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, for the service provider,
like the senior... The older adult centers, NORC and
the home meals delivery programs, are they going to
be trained so they know about Housing Connect?
Because that's one question that people always ask,
"How do I apply for senior housing?" And, I... We
want everyone to know, Housing Connect! How do you
do that? How... How... Which number do you call or
how do you get online? Uh, the general public, you
know, should be able to know, uh, so I just wanted to
see how the training is happening especially for
people who touch base with seniors.

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ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GRODEN: Right, so, I'll
start if you'd like, and then, uh, Commissioner
Ahmed, if you want to go ahead.

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Uhm, so, our providers currently, pretty
routinely, help clients navigate these systems,
resources, applications, opportunities. Uhm, we are
working more and more closely with HPD to kick off
these trainings which will begin with DFTA's

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2 frontline staff to strengthen our capacity and to
3 strengthen the capacity of the network.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: And, let me just add
5 to the, uh, to Associate Commissioner Groden's
6 comments.

7 So, from HPD's work, you know, we... Now, this
8 is going back six months, we've been laying the
9 groundwork for building on what has already been some
10 very tremendously fruitful conversations over the
11 years. So, aging in place, uh, even conversations
12 about home share or HUD 202 preservation programs,
13 uh, our general approach of presentation where we use
14 our dollars to make sure that we're making rehabs in
15 buildings so that people can stay in place. All of
16 this has led to HPD having the information that when
17 we go out and do our general housing ambassador work,
18 and we're looking for which partners come in through
19 our RFPs, and we're discussing outreach education and
20 on the ground organizing, that they are regularly
21 communicating to us not only how they are talking to
22 the general population, but we are asking them how
23 they're talking to vulnerable populations -- to
24 seniors, etc.

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2 Uh, so, you know, I think both agencies in
3 parallel have been doing the work of making sure that
4 people have planned to get to vulnerable or older New
5 Yorker populations.

6 What you're seeing now, over the last several
7 months, is a unifying of those efforts, uh, creating
8 strong, short, medium, and long-term goals so that
9 we go in to the next, uh, years figuring out how
10 we're... How our despart efforts, our parallel
11 efforts can be stronger.

12 I think that what we'd like to also do, and, you
13 know, we've talked about this before, is we need to
14 do a stronger focus on local and ethnic media. We
15 need to take advantage of not only the local papers
16 but, you know, church bulletins. We need to take
17 advantage of supermarket circulars. We need to start
18 getting this information in to the un-often
19 recognized, uh, view of the people who live in our
20 communities. And, we're doing a good job of that
21 now, and we're going to do a better job it moving
22 forward.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Now, that's good. I mean,
24 I'm... I'm glad you touched on those. Because,
25 like, a lot of people still don't know. Because, I

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2 run across them, they keep asking me, "Well how do I
3 get senior housing?" And, I am really surprised that
4 people don't even know, uh, a lot of people don't
5 call 3-1-1. Uh, and if they call DFTA, I'm glad to
6 hear that there's training as part of my staff. So,
7 I just hope that when they call DFTA they would get
8 an answer. You know, how do you sign up on Housing
9 Connect and how to do you apply and how do you get on
10 waiting lists? Uh, so, I mean that is one of the
11 most popular questions when you run in to anybody...

12 (Cross-Talk)

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Is, "How do I get on senior
15 housing?" (Cross-Talk)

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE
17 00:502:02)

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: And, I'll just add
19 Council...

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE 00:50:06)

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: No, please,
22 Commissioner?

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I was going to say,
24 and that precisely that point, is why this
25 partnership with HPD and the strengthening of this

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partnership that we've had over the years to ensure that all frontline staff are aware of those opportunities. It's something that we're so proud of. Which includes cross training of our staff, and that is essential. And, I'll go back to an Aging Cabinet. Uhm, but, uhm, but it is those kind of relationships with sister agencies that make accessibility and knowledge about programs more pervasive in the community.

And, I really want to acknowledge something that the Deputy Commissioner said. Which is, looking at parallel media, and looking at alternative media that are the non-traditional media and information outlets, almost the way we do a campaign... A vote... An election campaign, you look at the five touch points: Religious, neighborhoods, shops, as well as family, and house. And, using those touchpoints, to make sure that those outlets become information hubs for us also.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, definitely.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: And, I will just add, uhm, you know, in 2019, The Mayor made a commitment to use... To double down on city resources to make sure we're strengthening our ties

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2 with those community and ethnic media efforts. And,
3 that sends, I think, uh, a strong directive to the
4 agencies that this is where we have to go. That's in
5 addition to, and this why I love the Housing
6 Ambassador Program, I look at Goddard Riverside
7 program is critical to the west side of Manhattan
8 maybe to many more parts of the city. And, they have
9 a robust senior component to their overall program.
10 We've learned a great deal from them about we should
11 structure our Housing Connect literature. How we
12 should structure our tenant organizing literature.
13 So, you know, it is a two way conversation. It's
14 really why it's so critical that agencies make CBO's
15 part of their frontline staff, part of their
16 community outreach. It's a way for us to get better
17 at what we do.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and definitely also for
19 seniors, I mean, often time we say, Oh, you got to
20 get online. And, a lot of seniors are not tech
21 savvy. They don't know how to get online. So, we
22 have to look at, well how do we... How can they find
23 information? Who can they call? I mean, it's easy
24 for them for call, and when they call, can they talk
25 to someone that speaks their language, uh, that they

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2 can ,you know, explain to them about the procedure,
3 uh, and who can they get to help them fill out the
4 forms, where can they go? Uhm, I mean, we have to
5 really make it really more accessible for the senior
6 population to access this information. Uh, because
7 that's what they want. They all want to, you know,
8 be able to live in senior housing. Because, they're
9 all thinking about how they're going to be able to
10 age in place and stay in the city. And, that is the
11 number one call that we get. You know, if you offer
12 that whole... You know, how do I get on senior
13 housing? So, that... That's really critical. You
14 know?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: And, just to put a
16 call out there, our Housing Ambassador Program,
17 trainings are also available to elected officials,
18 staff, to other people... other local stakeholders
19 who do this work and put the communications out
20 there. So, we want everyone to know how to help
21 bridge that divide. So, you know, between, uh,
22 mayoral commitment to use half our annual media
23 budget to get in to ethnic media, between using, uh,
24 more resources to get in to local circulars and non-
25 traditional print, and then training more people to

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2 do this, plus a collaboration, we hope to get to
3 those goals that you set out for us.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah. We do a lot of that in
5 our office, too.

6

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: Yes, you do, and
7 that's... (Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, we do.

9

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: Absolutely.

10

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Uh-huh. I, uh, (Background

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Noise) (INAUDIBLE 00: 53:59) council, I saw, uh,

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Council Member Brooks - Powers hand up. So, I wanted

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to, uh, give her time to ask her question, and I can

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come back.

15

Aliyah, can you unmute Council Member Powers? I

16

mean, Brooks - Powers so she could ask her questions?

17

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Thank so much,

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Madam Chair. Uhm, and, good morning everyone. Uhm,

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it's good, as always to be here and part of the Aging

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Committee.

21

Uhm, I wanted to take a moment, and to say

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congratulations, Chair Chin, uhm, and my colleagues,

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and the committee staff on reaching their final

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oversight hearing of the term. Uhm, I've only been

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on this committee since I took office back in March,

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2 but it definitely been a pleasure working under your
3 leadership, Madam Chair, uhm, in that short window of
4 time.

5 And, thank you to the representatives from DFTA
6 for being here today as well. As we transition to
7 the term, it is my hope that this committee continues
8 to prioritize and champion the needs of our city's
9 older adults around affordable housing, access to
10 food, and financial support and other resources to
11 support their well-being.

12 I just have a couple of questions that I wanted
13 to ask, uhm, which include, how does DFTA coordinate
14 with NYCHA to protect older residents especially as
15 we enter winter months. Do the departments conduct
16 joint outreach to these residents, uhm, to address
17 issues like food access or heating issues? I will
18 say that, uhm, an example is, in my district, I have
19 Redfern Houses that over the last few weeks has been
20 without heat. And, we've had seniors there who are on
21 different devices for their health. Uhm, and as a
22 result of having no heat, they of course had no hot
23 water either.

24 Also, I'd like to know, does DFTA conduct
25 outreach to notify older adults of property tax

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2 opportunities like the senior citizens homeowner
3 exemption? I'd like to understand what that outreach
4 looks like. And, does DFTA collect data on how many
5 seniors contact the agency for tax assistance? Or,
6 how many apply for the exemptions based on the
7 outreach that DFTA does?

8 In south east Queens, we, uhm, a home to a lot of
9 home owners, and what I've been finding, especially
10 with the senior population, is that it gets to a
11 point on a fixed income, the property taxes are so
12 high, that they can't afford it. And, so they risk
13 losing their homes. And, what they do in like a last
14 moment action, is do things such as the reverse
15 mortgages. And, that really hurts generational
16 wealth, which they've spent their whole lives to
17 really build and develop -- working over 30 years in
18 their jobs, receiving their pension, and just wanting
19 to kind of enjoy their life after career period phase
20 in their life. And, ,you know, it's unfortunate that
21 they have to resort to those types of resources, uhm,
22 after spending so long paying a mortgage and not
23 being able to survive on just their pensions to pay
24 their property tax.

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2 So, uhm, thank you so much for the opportunity to
3 ask these questions, again, Madam Chair.

4

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm going to open up
6 about, uhm, our longstanding relationship with New
7 York City Housing Authority.

7

8 As you know, I believe we have about a 106, and,
9 uhm, community sites in NYCHA buildings. And have
10 had that for decades. And, have created a strong
11 partnership with the New York City Housing Authority
12 administration as well as with the residents who live
13 in New York City housing.

13

14 Uhm, so, when it comes to issues of a need of
15 services, it's something that we work on directly.
16 But, in terms of some of the physical infrastructure,
17 I'm going to turn over to NYCHA who is better
18 equipped to address how those are done and... And,
19 also a little bit about our strong partnership.

19

20 EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: Thank you so much,
21 Commissioner. And, thank you Council Member, for
22 your question.

22

23 Uhm, so, I will just echo, uh, the commissioner's
24 remarks. We have a longstanding, uhm, well-
25 established partnership with DFTA. Uhm, we're in
regular communication, almost daily, uh, around our

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2 work together whether it's coordination around our
3 older adult centers or, uhm, you know, referrals
4 between agencies for individual residents that
5 happens on a day to day basis.

6 Uhm, so, just to give a sense of how, uh, you
7 know, our sort of structure for working together.
8 Right? So, we have over 106 older adult centers or
9 NORCS that are across our properties. Uhm, in senior
10 only buildings, these buildings typically are the
11 ones that have senior centers or NORCS, and to the
12 extent that they don't, they are nearby. We also
13 have...

14 UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE 00:59:31)

15 EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: Our elderly Safe at Home
16 Program, which is program that NYCHA oversees, which
17 is that 17 developments. Uhm, these are on-sight
18 caseworkers who are supervised by a social worker
19 that provides one on one assistance and direct
20 outreach to seniors. And, then we have a network of
21 community based partners who also work with us around
22 friendly visiting programs, uhm, and referrals for
23 social and supportive services.

24 So, there's a network across our properties that
25 consist of DFTA as a core partner of other

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2 communities' partners, and then resources that NYCHA
3 brings directly.

4 Uhm, when we go in to heat season, or when we are
5 experiencing emergencies overall, uhm, we have direct
6 communication with all of our tenants, but
7 particularly seniors.

8 So, if there is a, uh, cold freeze for instance
9 or a cold snap in New York City, uhm, something that
10 is at an emergency level, we have protocols within
11 our agency where not only are we pushing out
12 information to residents, but our depart specifically
13 will call seniors who are known to us, who are known
14 to be vulnerable, uhm, residents who may be on life
15 sustaining equipment for instance, to make sure that
16 they have, uhm, the supports that they need in
17 advance of weather emergencies.

18 Uhm, if there is an outage in a building, tenants
19 are directly made aware of the outage and also the
20 estimated restoration time.

21 Uhm, this heat season, uhm, restoration time is
22 down by 20 percent. Uhm, and, you know, NYCHA has
23 put a number of actions in place to really make sure
24 that we're able to respond to outages. Uhm, that's
25 everything from staging mobile boilers across the

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2 city, so that they can be easily be deployed when we
3 have extended outages, uhm, making sure that we have
4 a 24/7 team that's available to address, uh, heating
5 issues as they occur. We've set up an emergency
6 command center throughout the heat season that's
7 staffed 24/7 that we can watch, uh, outages and
8 issues that may happen in real-time and make sure
9 we're responding. Uhm, and our team is integrated in
10 to that process, so that, uhm, to the extent there
11 are residents who have... who are known to us, uh,
12 with certain social service issues that we already
13 are assisting with case management, uhm, we know to
14 contact them in the event of an emergency, our
15 property managers also have protocols to make sure
16 that they're contacting residents in the event of
17 emergency. Uhm, and I would just add, throughout the
18 pandemic, our relationship with DFTA has only grown
19 tighter, uhm, because we've spent lots of effort
20 actually contacting residents to make sure that they
21 were aware of the precautions necessary during COVID
22 and connected to vaccinations and other resources,
23 and as a result of that, we referred a number of
24 residents to DFTA for ongoing case management
25 services in connections to the resources that they

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have, and they've continued to receive those services.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Can I just ask, uhm, in response to that, uhm, so, with the last couple of weeks with Redfern being without heat, uhm, what steps have been taken to reach out to those seniors if any?

EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: Sure, so I need to look in to Redfern in particular, because I'm not seeing, uhm, I'm looking at the outage report right now, and I'm actually not seeing an outage reported for Redfern. Uhm, so I need to... I'm not the best person to speak to heat, but we certainly can get an answer to you. I do know that we have a number of properties, uhm, that have, uhm, WEMS, these are essentially like wireless devices that regulate the heat. Right? So, you know, rather than overheating apartments, which is also a challenge that we've had, uhm, these devices are regulating heat. So, the heat may be within the required temperature, but it certainly may be different from residents experience in years prior. So, we need to look in to what's happening at Redfern and make sure that, uhm, residents have a temperature that's comfortable

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2 there, so that they feel warm in their apartments.

3 But, we can follow up and certainly get back to you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: No, definitely,
5 because I will say, I have been in touch with the
6 heating department. We had an emergency meeting.

7 But, I'm really, I guess the question is really more
8 to the services for the seniors, which would be more
9 on DFTA, uhm, in terms of what is being done to
10 really check in on our seniors, especially when they
11 are in, uhm, developments such a NYCHA, which are
12 city-owned properties. Uhm, you know, what is being
13 done? Like, what triggers a response for all of the
14 services that you've just, you know, shared that
15 exist? What triggers for your agency or DFTA, to
16 say, okay, we're going to start calling through the
17 seniors? How effective is it, because, for example,
18 and again, I don't want to speak out of turn, and
19 it's possible that you guys have reached out to
20 seniors, I have not heard that they received those
21 check calls on them. Uhm, but, you know, some of
22 them went a couple of days without the heat or hot
23 water. And, so, wanting to understand what measures
24 from the city agency perspective had been taken to
25

1
2 make sure we are taking good care of our older
3 populations... (Cross-Talk)

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I should... Thank
5 you for the question. I want you to know, rest
6 assured, we share your concerns. Both DFTA as well
7 as NYCHA work very arm and arm. And, as the
8 Executive Vice President had mentioned, that they
9 imagine that we also rely on our community partners.
10 So, that we will look at -- in the example of
11 Redfern, and, I too will look at... We have not
12 heard anything, uh, of a situation there. Uhm, but
13 what... The normal pattern of support would be that
14 we would identify an issue in a particular either
15 apartment of in a particular development or a
16 particular building, and that we would hear from
17 either a resident themselves, a senior center member,
18 or the senior center director. And, then we would
19 put in place all of our emergency protocols. And,
20 that is in cooperation with NYCHA to make sure that
21 older adults are supported. Most recently we had an
22 elevator situation, and it happened that after a
23 senior center was closed, that I can say that NYCHA
24 and DFTA both were in cooperation and working in
25 tandem to make sure that those adults who were

1
2 receiving services and who were left without an
3 elevator, were tended to until the elevator was
4 repaired. And, so, if there is... Once we are aware
5 that an emergency, both agencies pull its resources,
6 including its community based operations, to assure
7 that the needs are addressed.

8 Executive Vice President, uh, Sherman, did you
9 want to add anything to that?

10 EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: Sure, and so just to
11 build on that, uhm, so, yeah, so we definitely work
12 with individuals, uhm, and also there are residents
13 who may already be receiving ongoing services, right,
14 that have, uh, case managers or home health aides or
15 social workers that check in with them every day, and
16 report complaints. And, NYCHA is able to follow up
17 in that way.

18 Uhm, but, when there's like a major outage, uhm,
19 similar to what the commissioner described, we also,
20 uhm, work to activate warming centers together.
21 Right? So, we will take over a community center of
22 senior center, NYCHA will staff the center, DFTA will
23 staff center, depending on the shifts we staff
24 centers overnight. Right? Until that restoration
25 happens.

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2

Uhm, so, I wanted to dig in to Redfern in particular, uhm, because I'm sorry, Council Member, I'm not ,you know, familiar with situation there, and don't, I... I... I unfortunately don't see the outage. And, just to make sure that we're meeting the needs, uh, at this moment.

3

4

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Okay, so, yeah, within... If you can circle back offline, that would be great.

5

6

And, uhm, and Commissioner, if you could, uhm, respond to the second part of my question with the taxes and the services -- the resources around that, that's be great.

7

8

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure, thank you very much. Uhm, I will... I am going to ask, uh, Assistant Commissioner Groden to talk about the services that we offer regarding any, uh, tax, uh, assistance and homeowner exemption work that we may be involved in. Jocyln?

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ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GRODEN: Thank you, Commissioner, and thank you for your question.

15

16

Uhm, we are regular communication with our providers in terms of sharing resources, uhm, of course The Department, uh, for, uh, Finance runs most

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19

1
2 of these programs. Uhm, we make sure that any
3 information is out there with our providers and work
4 in partnership with them to make sure that
5 information is shared and disseminated with our
6 clients. Uh, we do also run a number of direct
7 services programs here, and we have the same business
8 process with our direct team to make sure that people
9 at the frontlines are informed and connected to the
10 information they need. Uhm, I'll also share with
11 you, in addition to that, uhm, over the last, uhm, I
12 guess, year or so, we've implemented a Chat with the
13 Expert Financial Awareness and Fraud Prevention
14 series, uhm that partners with agencies like
15 Department of Finance, uhm, to bring information
16 directly to older adults, uhm, curate a question and
17 answer to make sure that we have active dialogues
18 with the older adults to make sure that they have the
19 information and answers they need to access services
20 and supports.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, uhm, yeah, thank you
23 for your question, Council Member Brooks - Power. I
24 hope you will continue our efforts to make sure
25 seniors are taken care of and continue to advocate

1
2 for more resources. So, we're counting on you to do
3 that. Thank you.

4 Uhm, I thought I saw Council Member Vallone's
5 hand. Well, maybe he had to take a call. But, we'll
6 come back to him.

7 Uh, so, Commissioner, uhm, I guess, like, when we
8 talking about senior housing, uhm, does the city
9 bill enough housing under HPD's uh, Senior Affordable
10 Rental Apartment Program? The SARA Program? And,
11 what else can the city do to promote more affordable
12 housing for seniors?

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I think the city has
14 made a target and has... It's well on its way for
15 that target. We have, uh, 12,600 units for older
16 adults that have been built. And, I will turn it
17 over to Deputy Commissioner, uh, Ahmed, uh, to...
18 Ahmed, I am sorry to be so informal with you, uh, to
19 amplify, uh, any other additional information that he
20 may want to provide. But, the city has made a
21 commitment, and we're well on our way to meeting that
22 commitment.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: Uh, thank you,
24 Commissioner, and, uhm, I think you did say it best.
25 We have made a serious commitment. So, as people

1
2 know, the administration came out with The Housing
3 New York Plan, which was to set the city and its
4 admin apart in terms of both housing production, new
5 construction, and preservation, only to come back
6 with 2.0 that set a goal of 300,000 by 2026. And, to
7 that goal, we are well on our way meeting that goal
8 with 195,000 units of housing preserved or newly
9 constructed all which, of course, is affordable to
10 senior, uh, older New Yorkers.

11 Uhm, and you asked a very specific question about
12 SARA and that subset, and, again, we are pushing and
13 we are working hard even recognizing the fact that,
14 uh, through the pandemic there were more than, uh,
15 more than enough huge obstacles to keep the
16 production train moving. The keep the new
17 construction train moving -- preservation. But, even
18 then, we saw last year, uh, one of our best years in
19 senior production ever with ,you know, 2,300 newly
20 constructed and preserved units in that year alone.
21 Which, that brought us to where we are now with the
22 12,657. But, again, I don't want to lose sight of
23 the fact that a 195,000 units is something is
24 available to all New Yorkers. And, going back to
25 what we talked about earlier, is our job is the job

1
2 of the city to make sure that New Yorkers are aware
3 of how they can apply and be part of that program and
4 be part of that success that we've created.

5 Uh, and we continue to do the work evaluated,
6 uhm, our... our... Our private site inquiries that
7 come in. There are people out there who believe in
8 the affordable housing and senior housing goal, and
9 so they come to us and our development teams, our
10 preservation teams, especially when we look at our
11 work to preserve Mitchell-Lama HDF's, keep people in
12 place, we have a robust program to do that. Our HUD
13 section 202 housing, and then we look, of course, at
14 our public sites and making sure that, uh, we are
15 using that to hit and serve all types of populations
16 given our commitment to fair and accessible housing.
17 And, this is an area where, uh, we've had a lot of
18 success with our partners at NYCHA, who is equally as
19 committed to making sure that we're using public lad
20 to meet those vulnerable populations.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, uh, I guess that,
22 uhm, I mean, for seniors, I guess we look at, you
23 know, we have younger seniors and we have older
24 seniors. And, one of the other things is to really
25 make people aware they could just apply for any

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2 affordable housing, uhm, across five boroughs and
3 just get in there. Right? If they are a younger
4 senior, they can just get in that housing, and then
5 later on, they could apply for senior housing. So, I
6 guess that's a message that we really have to get
7 across. I mean, even you are a senior, you could
8 qualify for regular affordable housing that's
9 available.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: Absolutely, and I
11 would remiss not to mention that ,you know, with the
12 passage of MIH and ZQA, we further expanded that in
13 to the ,you know, as of right universe where with ZQA
14 in particular, we took down barriers that made it, in
15 the past, probably more difficult to entertain senior
16 housing. ZQA gave a permanent incentive to creating
17 senior housing that must be used for senior housing,
18 otherwise that incentive would go away. It also took
19 down barriers for creating housing that allowed
20 people, older New Yorkers, at different stages of
21 being older an older New Yorker, to be able to
22 transition in that housing by creating the steps and
23 the parameters for that type of construction to
24 happen -- those type of senior living buildings to
25 happen.

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So, we're using our finances. We're using zoning, we're using outreach to make sure that the 195, both publically pushed and private development can serve these New Yorkers. And, we just have to do as best a job as we can to get that word out.

7

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Yeah.

8

So, DFTA has that, I remember the guide that DFTA produced to make building owners of senior friendly modifications.

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11

Uh, do financial incentives exist for building owners to adapt to these senior friendly modifications?

13

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you for acknowledging this guide that we created, you know, that aging in place, which the mantra of The Department is for the Aging and the goal of this city.

18

19

Uh, and, so as you know, it's... It's to advance... The guide... advance recommendations. And, it's a roadmap for landlord to ensure, uh, units remain accessible. And, you know, it's built on universal design principles.

24

25

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2 And, uhm, and I can, uh, turn again to The Deputy
3 Commissioner so that he could amplify how, uhm HPD is
4 using the Aging In Place Guide.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I think before that, I also
6 want, uh, to have, you know, uhm, NYCHA, you know,
7 uhm, V.P. Sherman or Charney to really also address,
8 like, in NYCHA buildings. Not the senior buildings.
9 But, even in NYCHA buildings you're going to...
10 you're getting an aging population. I mean, probably
11 some of the buildings, uh, the older buildings,
12 you're going to probably have NORCS in there, too.

13 Uh, so, are you also utilizing this universal
14 concept to help people, residents, uh, to age in
15 place in the NYCHA buildings also?

16 EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: So, I can jump in. And,
17 then... (Cross-Talk)

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

19 EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: And, then I can turn it
20 to my colleague, uhm, V.P. Charney, to speak about
21 how we're addressing aging infrastructure within our,
22 uhm, within our construction perseveration portfolio.
23 So, within our existing portfolio, uhm , ,you know,
24 we certainly have updated our design guidelines, the
25 design principles that we use as an agency to factor

1
2 in a number of components related to livability
3 including adopting many of the recommendations around
4 making an age friendly community. Uhm, obviously
5 NYCHA's has a focus on also ensuring that we can
6 increase the volume of apartments that we have that
7 are accessible and respond to those requests as we
8 receive them. And, also, you know, part of that is
9 also making the campus accessible as well. And, so,,
10 you know, to the extent that our capital dollars are
11 able to, uhm, improve the campus to increase
12 accessibility as well as, uhm, have the adaptations
13 that we need in our apartments to make them 504
14 apartments or make them accessible for the needs that
15 we see with our senior residents, uhm, we are
16 continuing to do that work. But, we also have been
17 incorporating that in our real estate portfolio,
18 through our preservation work, as well as new
19 construction. Uhm, so, I'll turn it over to V.P.
20 Charney to speak about some of that work.

21 V. P. CHARNEY: Yeah, thanks, uhm, not, uh, not
22 too much to add. I'd just say that, you know, one of
23 the best opportunities for this, uhm, is really ,you
24 know, when we're talking about comprehensive
25 modernization, uh, either through comprehensive

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2 modernization through NYCHA capital funding, uhm,
3 through the proposed blueprint plan or, uh, or
4 through the RAD PACT Program, uhm, is really... Are
5 some great opportunities to make these, uhm, capital
6 changes, uh, for universal design and accessibly
7 through... in our buildings.

8

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

9

Does HPD provide resources for property owners to
10 be able to, uh, make their units for seniors or their
11 building more age friendly?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TIGANI: So, in, uh, so
13 there's a couple of ways that we do that. So, as you
14 mentioned earlier, uh, we do have the aging in place
15 initiative where HPD consulted with DFTA and used
16 DFTA design guidelines to develop a survey for
17 improvements. So, we offered, uh, to tenants if they
18 would... uh, if this is something that they need.
19 Then, I think it's fair to say that we reached out to
20 tens of thousands. We saw a survey response of about
21 800 who self-selected in to the program. And, uh,
22 we're continuing to push that. In addition, as a way
23 to maybe encourage people to look at this more, or
24 just get more information how to use their space in a
25 safer way, pre the pandemic, we were working closely

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2 with DOHMH on fall prevention research and outreach.
3 And, through that, finding ways as to how our rehabs
4 could be better designed in order to make sure that
5 when we get in to an existing building to do work, or
6 construct something new, that the tenants are at
7 their safest possible point. That's all actually been
8 fed into our current, very recently updated. I think
9 that earlier this year, design guide... new
10 construction design guidelines, which specify, uh,
11 looking both at the apartments, uh, how the common
12 areas, how the building itself is built, and making
13 that, uh, making is suitable for all types of
14 populations, uh, from seniors to 504 designated
15 units, uh, that we work with MOPD on. So, and what
16 that means basically is that when we finance a
17 project, we're using our design guidelines, which
18 speak to these issues and these questions to make
19 sure that they're ironed out so that we feel
20 comfortable our apartments are accessible to the most
21 number of people. So, that's our... Those are our
22 preservation deals. Those are our new construction
23 deals. So, when we're doing SARA's, ELLA programs,
24 mix and match, or using the preservation deals that
25 we have, and those term sheets, uhm, all of that

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2 feeds through this screening mechanism, which is our
3 design guidelines to get us, uh, apartments and
4 commons spaces that meet the right requirements.

5 And, a lot of this came through the survey work
6 we did with DFTA so we can learn to do that well.

7 Also, and, I'll go back again, to the conversations
8 with our housing ambassadors that serve seniors, when
9 they tell us when they go visit apartments what the
10 issues are.

11 Uh, separately, we also help homeowners who are
12 seniors with being able to retrofit. So, we have two
13 programs, uh, one is called SCHAP is a program that
14 we run with a foundation called Parodneck Foundation
15 that are based out of the lower east side. And, then
16 one which is more new, and, uh, something that we're
17 very excited about, The HomeFix Program that we've
18 run with the center for New York City Neighborhoods.

19 Uh, these programs are geared to low-income families,
20 and one to four family homes. But, especially for
21 seniors, there are favorable terms, and we definitely
22 try to make sure we get seniors in the program. And,
23 it allows them to make critical repairs, uh, at an
24 expense that is something is bearable and they can
25 continue to maintain that wealth and investment that

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2 they've been doing for decades as Council Member
3 Brooks-Powers mentioned earlier.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Great. I mean, like, all these
5 resources, so we just got to get that information out
6 there, so that people know these resources are
7 available. You know, that definitely should be
8 under... I assume the caregiver program has all this
9 information also to be given out to caregivers.

10 Uhm, another, uhm, question relating... This is
11 relating to, uh, in your testimony, Commissioner, you
12 talked about the Assigned, uh, Counsel Project, so
13 how many clients does DFTA, uhm, represent, I mean
14 annually, uh, I mean the DFTA Assigned Counsel
15 Project represent in housing annually?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure, sure, the
17 Assigned Counsel Project is something that we are
18 proud to be a part of, because it's one of the few
19 supports that we can provide directly to an older
20 adult. But, I believe that there are major gaps in
21 that, and I'll have Ygnacio speak to that. Uhm, but,
22 it... The Assigned Counsel Project is a joint
23 program between HRA's office and DFTA. HRA provides
24 the legal assistance, and DFTA provides the social
25

1
2 service and case assistance. And, currently, the
3 program is serving about 415 clients per year.

4 Uhm, is there anything, uh, Ygnacio Silvestre,
5 who's the director of that project, has a good team
6 working on this. Is there anything that you would
7 want to add to that?

8 DIRECTOR SILVESTRE: Sure, thank you, uhm,
9 Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez, and honorable members of
10 this Aging Committee for giving me the opportunities
11 to appear in front of you.

12 Uhm, we are extremely proud of the work that The
13 Assigned Counsel Project has been conducting since
14 the program was created.

15 Uhm, we also, uhm ,you know, what makes Assigned
16 Counsel Project -- ACP as it's s known in the
17 community -- so unique, is the holistic approach that
18 we use. Uh, we work very closely with for community
19 programs, uh, partners, uhm, legal service providers.
20 We work also with all the sister agencies. Uhm,
21 there's so many people working behind the scenes that
22 makes the Assigned Counsel Project an effective
23 eviction prevention program.

24 However, there's still a gap. There is a need to
25 address the social services component. Right? Uhm,

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2 may... The majority of these cases are arriving at a
3 housing court as a civil legal issue. But, they are
4 on the line, social services, in many cases mental
5 health, are needs that a client has that need to be
6 addressed.

7 As I mentioned earlier, where legal services
8 community partners do outstanding work in trying to
9 provide the best legal representation that is
10 available. But, unless we address the social service
11 needs, the mental health needs, there is a high
12 possibility that we will not be able to preserve our
13 client's tenancy, and most likely these clients are
14 going to return back to the court system. And, I
15 just want bring to your attention of what exactly it
16 is that we do. We provide short term crisis
17 intervention by conducting home visits, building
18 trust in relationships with our clients. We also
19 make court appearances. We appear as a friend of the
20 court. We make recommendations on the social service
21 aspect of each case where an older is the respondent.
22 We reinsure the court, The Department for Aging,
23 along with other social service agencies in community
24 point, we do whatever it takes to provide the
25 assistance that is needed. Uhm, we work close with

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2 Adult Protective Services -- both the regional office
3 and the field office. In many occasions, we conduct
4 joined home visits to assess the living conditions
5 and potential social service needs and mental health
6 needs of our client. Uhm, in many occasions as well,
7 we supervise heavy duty cleanings to make sure that
8 our client allows access, but most important to
9 provide emotional support. Uhm, we believe we are
10 doing a great job, but we also believe that with the
11 necessary support, we will be able to reach out to
12 more clients and be available to our community
13 partners to help them in any other areas that they
14 will need.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Does DFTA staff directly do
17 this, or do you contract out to a provider agency to
18 do the... the work that you were just talking about?

19 DIRECTOR SILVESTRE: Uhm, no, Assigned Counsel
20 Project at The Department for the Aging is a small
21 unit, and we do that. We do that. We go in
22 (INAUDIBLE 01:27:21) ... (Cross-Talk)

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, so your... Your staff does
24 that? Okay.

25 DIRECTOR SILVESTRE: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, then you were saying that DAFT is the... the resources for the social service component.

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DIRECTOR SILVESTRE: Correct. I mean, (INAUDIBLE 01:27:32)... (Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, how do you see... How do you see, like, getting that resource? Do you get it? Do you have to partner with HRA? Or, should funding be provided to DFTA to have that component included in this program?

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DIRECTOR SILVESTRE: We welcome both. I believe that, uh, you know, working in conjunction... Funding is definitely, uh, plays a bigger role. Uhm, but, also working with our sister agencies, uh, as Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez mentioned earlier, that case that we were able to bring the senior back home couldn't be possible without of the help of HRA and The Department of Buildings.

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So, the answer to your question is both. We would welcome both.

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, as you know, uh, Chairwoman Chin, the resources, the needs always outpace the resources.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, I know, I mean, and we

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also have to look at it as a best long-term

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investment, that if we pay for it now, it will save

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the government money later. But, they just don't see

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that.

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Uh, okay, uh, I guess, the other question that I

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have is that, uhm, you know, we were talking about

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NORCS, so, and NORCS is the... a key to DFTA's goal

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of helping seniors age in place. Now, what... How

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does DFTA metric that you use... Or, do you evaluate

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whether a NORCS is really serving the seniors well

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to, uh, keeping them healthy and safe?

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uhm, Jocelyn, did

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you want to talk a little bit about the NORC Program,

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and, uh, one of the, uhm, and some of the services

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that we provide there? I know, uhm, as with...

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And, let me... Before you do that, Jocelyn, uhm,

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sorry, as we do with all of our programs, Chairwoman

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Chin, we have annual assessments, and we have, uhm,

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an each contract has a number of services that

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they're supposed to provide, as well as individuals

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and units of services that they're supposed to

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provide. And, that same process of, uhm, assessment

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and review and monitoring occurs. As it does for

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2 older adult centers, it occurs for all of the NORCS
3 as well.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, okay.

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6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright? So, that
7 same process is in place. And, the one thing that
8 we're moving towards this year, is more... We're
9 looking at... in DFTA as a whole, uhm, and it's
10 putting a place a quality control implementation
11 process. So, that not only do we monitor to make
12 sure that you're in compliance with your contract,
13 but now we're going to look that... look at that
14 against some quality standards of some services. So,
15 we're really excited about that next step.

16

17

Uh, and Jocelyn's going, uh, Assistant
18 Commissioner, uh, Groden, did you want to add
19 anything?

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21

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GRODEN: Uhm, sure, and
22 thank you for bringing that up, Commissioner.

23

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25

Uhm, so just to start definitionally for second,
26 uhm, to be considered a classic NORC, a building must
27 have least 350 residents, with at least 40 percent of
28 households including an older adult, or a building
29 complex that has at least 1,500 older adults,
30 regardless of the percentage of units that they

1
2 actually occupy. A neighborhood NORC is
3 geographically defined area, with no more than 2,000
4 residents aged 60 and older who occupy at least 40
5 percent of the households. The buildings must be,
6 uhm, six stories or less, and/or single or small
7 family houses, and the majority of the residents must
8 be low to moderate income or at/or below 80 percent
9 of the AMI as defined by the US Department of Housing
10 and Urban Development.

11 Some of the services that we provide at NORCS,
12 they're divided in to core, uhm which are mandatory,
13 and non-core services.

14 Core services include things that The
15 Commissioner mentioned before, case management, case
16 assistance, healthcare management and assistance in
17 health promotion.

18 Non-core services include, but are not limited
19 to, a variety of educational and recreational
20 programs, in home contact and support, which can
21 include shopping, chore assistance, friendly
22 visiting, telephone reassurance, housekeeping, escort
23 and transportation.

24 As The Commissioner said, as part of our routine,
25 workflow across all of DFTA's many contracted

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2 services, including NORCS, uhm, they're mandated as
3 part of contract deliverables to provide certain
4 outputs. So, an output, for example, could be case
5 assistance. So, uhm, program officers, uh, who...
6 uhm, providing program oversight, and technical
7 assistance, are looking to make sure that we're
8 delivering those outputs and quality of service
9 around things like health promotion, uhm, to the
10 degree, uhm, that is required as part of their
11 contracts.

12 I'm excited that The Commissioner also mentioned
13 DFTA's commitment and implementation of continuous
14 quality improvement, uhm, which we have been doing
15 throughout much of contract portfolio. And, we are
16 really looking to formalize, uhm, to look at what are
17 those key metrics in NORCS, and across our program
18 portfolio, that really drive meaningful outcomes for
19 clients. Uhm, and are looking at those outcomes to
20 work in tandem with our providers, uhm, to look at
21 opportunities to test and challenge the system, and
22 continue to build on the great work we're doing.
23 And, to make sure that we're providing, uhm, the most
24 meaningful service to our clients. You know, some
25 example of that, uhm , would be customer satisfaction

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2 surveys, which we do in a number of our program
3 portfolios to look at that data -- look at clients,
4 uh, and what they're saying and what they need, uhm,
5 and use that ,you know, to continue to build and
6 evolve our programs.

7

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean, like, for older
8 adults who are participating, whether it's in NORCS
9 or senior centers, they are so much happier and
10 lively. And, the activity that they engage in, uh,
11 it's like, I mean, I visited some of them recently, I
12 mean, they're just like... They don't look like
13 older adults, which is great, because I think if we
14 could somehow, uhm, really capture that data, that by
15 investing in older adult centers, and investing in
16 NORCS, the seniors are healthier and we safe on
17 medical dollars. That's an investment, uh...

18

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

19

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And it's just... It's been so
20 great. Uhm... (Cross-Talk)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, I wanted to
22 add, I... (Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, Commissioner... Oh,
24 okay... (Cross-Talk)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, I'm sorry. I was going to... I wanted to add something to that. About two years ago, or whenever it was, because that's... I have to think of pre-pandemic, right? When we first tried to... You know, it's like, where are we?

Uhm, when we first started this conversation, one of the things we did was engaged in networks on what were some of the areas that they thought DFTA should improve. And, one of them, and I never forget this, and it was Nancy from Visions program, clearly, I mean, it was so targeted in my first meeting, and she said, "Lorraine, you measure units, you don't measure quality. And, what we want you to do is look at exactly those things that improve lives, because that supports all of us advance... It also lets foundations know that there is evidence based improvements that this investment pays off in the long run."

And, it was... We had a whole, you know, year -- 9 month conversation, building in, what are some of those questions that we should ask.

And, so there was a taskforce. So, that is the kind of work that comes directly from the provider

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2 network, that we are able to implement now, of
3 course, because the panda sort of set us back a
4 little bit. Uhm, but, we're so pleased that we did
5 all of the groundwork and are able to start
6 implementing some of that today. And, I just wanted
7 to make sure that we are aware of... It's... It's a
8 commitment we have, but it also is generated by the
9 network. Because, they were looking for... They
10 know what you just said, "It makes my life better."
11 But, how do we demonstrate that and quantify that
12 structurally?

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, I mean, we... We
14 definitely need to do more of that.

15 Uhm, the next question I have is, like, now that
16 we have a new senior housing bill, and some of the
17 senior housing has space dedicated for senior centers
18 or other programs that's incorporated in the
19 building, uhm, so I have to questions, I have one for
20 you, Commissioner, and I have one for NYCHA.

21 Uh, so, I wanted to see, like, in these new
22 senior buildings, uh, that are developed, like, how
23 many of the new, uhm, with the RFP, like, how many
24 new older adults center are included in this new
25 senior building. So, that's a question for you.

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2 And, for NYCHA, I want to see how many senior
3 centers have been renovated and upgraded in NYCHA
4 developments, uhm, recently? Because, I know that in
5 past hearing, we were shown, like, some of the really
6 terrible, dilapidated conditions that some of the
7 centers were. I remember one of the council members
8 had a picture, and we were, like, it was like a blue,
9 you know, plastic on the ceiling, and it's sinking,
10 because of water leakage.

11 So, uh, so those are the -- one for DFTA, and one
12 for NYCHA.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, I can tell you
14 that with... The goal was to extend, uh, and to
15 provide 25... The goal of the... of the RFP was
16 always to... expansion. It was expansion and also
17 revisiting program designs, because the programs had
18 been the same for more than 10 years. And, so this
19 was an opportunity. All we did was extend contracts,
20 and the RFP was to have us take a fresh look at how
21 and what we were providing.

22 And, the goal was to do, uhm, at least... And,
23 to expand to 25 new sites.

24 Uhm, and I can tell you that it is upwards of
25 that number, close to 31.

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2 Uhm, exactly how many of them or NYCHA
3 facilities, I will have to get back to you on that.
4 I don't have that data for you.

5 But, I'm.... And, I am going to turn it over...
6 (Cross-Talk)

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But, how many are in, like,
8 new... new buildings? New senior buildings that
9 were built? Uh, they had created space that was...
10 That could be used for senior centers.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I, you know, I'm
12 un... I don't want to... I know... I know of three
13 that were done. Alright? And, some of them are in,
14 I think in... One of them is in Ayala's district,
15 uhm, which was a new... I think, yeah, Mitchel was
16 another one, uh, that was moved over to a new
17 facility.

18 I can get you exactly what those numbers are. I
19 don't want to mislead or over represent. But, I can
20 say that we're really proud that the RFP put
21 attention to that. And, as you know, that the RFP
22 put a lot of attention on moving programs that were
23 discretionary -- as many as we possibly could, given
24 the needs of a community, uh, from discretionary,
25 partially ethnic and minority programs. Moving those

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2 from your discretionary pot. It was a commitment we
3 made to you and Danny Dromm, and we've lived in to
4 that commitment. And, we will give you more details
5 of that, uhm, at another point.

6 But, what I can tell you now, is that in terms of
7 improvements, we have had a long partnership with
8 NYCHA, and then I will turn it over to, uhm,
9 Executive Vice President, uh, Sherman, who will, uh,
10 talk about that.

11 But, we've worked very hard, uh, to improve
12 facilities at senior centers in partnership. Some of
13 that was, you know, grateful to you for the HVAC, uh,
14 funds. You know, that may have been the thing that
15 contributed to that. But, has been something that we
16 have been working very diligently on together to make
17 sure that those facilities are, uhm, in a... And,
18 we've used the opportunity of, uh, that we've had
19 during this pandemic to make a lot of those
20 improvements.

21 Uhm, Sideya, is there anything that you would
22 want to add to that?

23 EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: Sure, so, uhm, to the
24 Commissioner's point, uhm, we have continued to

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2 respond to repairs at our centers throughout the
3 pandemic.

4 Uhm, and we still work in partnership to really
5 address issues that are happening across our
6 portfolio.

7 Uh, we can certainly up on the specific center
8 that you identified. Uhm, I'd have to look in to...
9 to that specific site.

10 But, generally, (INAUDIBLE 01:41:21) our
11 portfolio... (Cross-Talk)

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's an old issue.
13 That's an old issue that... (Cross-Talk)

14 EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: Okay... (Cross-Talk)

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: That's an old issue (INAUDIBLE
16 01:41:25) ... (Cross-Talk)

17 EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: Got it okay.... (Cross-
18 Talk)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We... You... You
20 took care of that one Sideya... (Cross-Talk)

21 EXECUTIVE V.P. SHERMAN: Alright, good, glad to
22 hear that.

23 So, uhm, but we, uh, we certainly can followup.
24 So, as you're aware, Chair, uhm, typically, when
25 we're able to have major capital improvements across

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2 our existing senior centers, that's really through
3 ,you know, work in collaboration with the council.
4 And, we are grateful for that.

5 Uhm, and we've also had some state funding that
6 we've been able to put towards our centers as well.

7 And, so, we're continuing to blend funding
8 sources to address capital needs and respond to day
9 to day repairs. And, you know, and obviously with
10 collaboration and support from DFTA, we've been able
11 to really work on the HVAC challenges as well.

12 Uhm, but, when we have an opportunity to have
13 ,you know, nice, beautiful, brand-new renovations, a
14 lot of that has really been tied to, uhm, our PACT
15 program and, uhm, modernization efforts within our
16 entire portfolio. Right?

17 So, where we're able to work with our development
18 partners to have major upgrades with our resident
19 portfolio, we're able to include our community and
20 senior centers as well.

21 So, I can turn to my colleague, uhm, V.P.
22 Charney, to speak a little bit about what's happening
23 in our preservation portfolio. But, also, uhm, as we
24 build new construction, how we're incorporating
25 community facilities.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm.

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V. P. CHARNEY: Yeah, sure thanks, uhm, so, the
4 yeah, Sideya's right. When we're doing our PACTS,
5 uh, projects, uhm, we focus obviously mainly on the
6 NYCHA buildings -- the residences, uh, many of
7 which... some of which are senior buildings, some of
8 which house, uh, a lot of, uh, New York City seniors.
9 Uhm, but we do, uh, look at the existing state of all
10 of the community facilities, including any existing
11 senior centers, uhm, and look to what renovations
12 need to be made, uh, if they're required or just what
13 upgrades and modernization we can do to those seniors
14 as part of our PACT.

15

So, we are, you know, really looking holistically
16 at the campuses, uh, and working with... Uh, most
17 of the centers have existing providers in those
18 remain in place after the PACT program.

19

Uhm, and, then, yeah, on our new construction, we
20 do partner with.... In partnership with HPD, we look
21 for the opportunities to build new affordable housing
22 on NYCHA land where we can. Uhm, I have done a
23 number of senior projects over the years. Uhm,
24 Millbrook Houses in The Bronx, and, uh, Ingersoll in
25 Brooklyn are two that come to mind.

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2 Ingersoll, uh, recently opened, uhm, as one of
3 the first LGBT founded, uh, senior communities in the
4 city... Uhm, senior affordable communities in the
5 city. And, there's a, uh new center on the ground
6 floor run by SAGE that is either opening or going to
7 be opening.

8 So, definitely, uh, looking to, uh, improve our
9 existing centers as well as add new where we can.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: It, uh, I know there was a
11 hearing, uh, recently on capitol projects. I mean,
12 the council... The council members, we always, you
13 know, prioritize funding, you know, with NYCHA, and
14 we want to make sure that we improve the senior
15 centers, the community centers.

16 Are you looking at in terms of, like, fast
17 tracking some of the, uh, the projects that have ,you
18 know, the funding has been totally allocated to
19 really make it happen as quickly as possible.

20 V. P. CHARNEY: I can check in with our capital
21 department on the status of the improvements to the
22 existing NYCHA centers, uhm, that have been funded
23 through city capital, uhm, and get back to you.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean, I also requested
25 a separate meeting, uh, to look at some of the

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2 projects in my district that I have funded. I want
3 to see that they get started. I mean, it's like,
4 it's been so long, and it's like the improvement will
5 be tremendous. Uh, for... And, some of them are
6 used by our seniors. And, we're looking at the...
7 the center that exists now, I mean some of them, you
8 know, they're not the... not the best ones. So, if
9 there are other centers in the neighborhood, the
10 seniors are going to go somewhere else. But, we
11 definitely have to improve the ones that we have now,
12 uh, so that seniors can really enjoy the facilities.
13 And, since... Especially when capital dollars have
14 already been allocated, uh, we want those projects to
15 move forward as quickly as possible, so we can really
16 have then enjoy the facilities.

17 Uh, and my last question, thank you for all your
18 patience, since this is the last hearing, but
19 Commissioner, are you ready to give us the
20 information about all of the older adult centers that
21 have been funded, the NORCS, where they are, and
22 also, uhm, the ones that are not funded? I mean, is
23 there plans to take care of the seniors that go to
24 those, and also the number of, uhm, the TRE, The
25 Taskforce on Racial Inclusionary Equity

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2 Neighborhoods, uh, that would benefit from ,you know,
3 new programs, uhm, in these areas.

4 Uhm, so, are you allowed now to give us that
5 data? That information?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm allowed
7 (INAUDIBLE 01:46:37)... (Cross-Talk)

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Now that we are in December?

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We are in December!
10 And, this will happen before you and I say, Happy New
11 Year. Uhm, I... And, we're so on track.

12 Uhm, I want... I'm going to give you some
13 information, because there's... (Cross-Talk)

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: still one more
16 public hearing, and I, you know, and all the...
17 (Cross-Talk)

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh... (Cross-Talk)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: With all due
20 respect, it... You know, with all due respect, I am
21 very limited. But, I will always, you know, push the
22 envelope as much as I possibly can.

23 So, I want to give you some... some... some
24 data that we're really proud of. UH, you know, we...
25 For the network, we have... There's going to be 308

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2 new sites. You know, and the... And, of that, 155
3 will be older adult clubs, and, uhm, and 23 NORCS.
4 Alright? So, that's... That's what we have, you
5 know, for the... And, we're going to have a total of
6 a 178 sites of which are located in community
7 districts that are TRIE. Alright? That includes
8 TRIE. That to us was a priority. You knew that.
9 There are the three things that we were going for
10 here, which was, inequity and funding, making sure
11 that we narrowed the funding gap between the long
12 established programs and our smaller ethnic, uh,
13 minority community based operators.

14 The other thing that we were going for was to
15 make sure that we addressed historical, underserved
16 communities like the TRIE communities. And, that was
17 another priority.

18 And, then the third priority was also to expand
19 services, uhm, be... And, to also, uh, that was the
20 third priority. And, in that expansion was to look
21 at current service models to make sure that we had
22 some improvements. Because, you can't have a
23 contract in place for the twelve years -- ten years,
24 and not look for new innovation.

25

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2 The contract... It was never to increase dollars
3 for current contractors... (Cross-Talk)

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I want to be really
6 clear with that, and I want to say that over and over
7 again. Because, I think that has been a source of
8 conversation.

9 What is really clear here is that everyone was
10 held harmless, and we used the model budget, which is
11 something that was so designed by both the council
12 leadership, and the council members, and DFTA to come
13 up with an equitable funding pattern, uh, for
14 agencies that were running older adult clubs.

15 And, we used the model budget as a bases for
16 establishing budget parameters. So, when we looked
17 at programs that were lower than the model budget, we
18 increased them to make sure that they were at least
19 at a minimum of the model budget.

20 And, then we also looked at... And, those who
21 were above the model budget, we held them harmless.
22 We did not take money away from them. Alright? And,
23 so, that's really important. Uhm, of the existing
24 providers, and I've... I've shared this with you
25 before, there was only one provider that wasn't

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2 granted a contract. And, that, I cannot go in to the
3 details as to why, uh, here.

4 But, I can just tell you that, uhm, five
5 organizations that are brand new to DFTA are joining
6 the network. That's something that we haven't seen
7 in twenty years and DFTA.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thirteen
10 organizations that are currently... that were
11 currently funded with discretionary dollars, are now
12 based live. That's something that, you know, you've
13 worked hard for, and you've asked us to look at every
14 year.

15 But, now I have a request of you, and to The
16 Aging Committee, and to the future Aging Committee:
17 Please make sure that those discretionary dollars
18 still stay in an aging portfolio. That... All that
19 does is support additional services that you know are
20 needed. You know, like... (Cross-Talk)

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Creative Aging and
23 all of the things that we've talked about. With your
24 efforts, we've have also... Now with the... With
25 the homecare meals, I mean, so, and many of these

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2 programs are, uhm, providers of home delivered meals,
3 and so we see that.

4 But, the other thing that we were able to do with
5 this RFP that has been, uh, amazing was because the
6 city, with your... with the council's support, we
7 were able to create indirect rates for all programs.
8 So, for that community based organization, for that,
9 you know, organization that never had an indirect
10 amount, all of them have 10 percent indirect costs.
11 We've just gave that, so that... that... That's an
12 additional resource that you could use for
13 administrative purposes, that you can also use for
14 innovation, and you can use it for improving your
15 facility. And it... That's why it's an indirect
16 cost. You can use it for program as well as
17 administration. And, that's the beauty of it. I've
18 been... In my years of nonprofit and running The
19 Hispanic Federation, I would have loved all of my
20 agencies to have an indirect cost. But, now we're
21 able to do that.

22 And, I want to also tell you that 9 percent of
23 those, we also honored the indirect rates of those
24 existing programs that were beyond 10 percent. This
25 administration made that commitment. So, that some

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2 of them have received, you know, upwards of hundreds
3 of thousands of dollars than anyone else, because we
4 are... we honored the approved rate, uh, indirect
5 rate. Uhm, 61 percent have received significant
6 increases because of that.

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Uhm, and that's what I will give you now.

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Alright? So, that's the numbers. We've been in

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overlay of where service... where the service gaps

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existed. We gave to each new council member, and now

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we're submitting to all of the council members -- we

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did a map of where senior services are. Right?

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, then we did an

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overlay by council districts of my.... this was all

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the staff, because they're a lot smarter than I am,

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and a lot more adept at this. And, so (INAUDIBLE

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01:52:59)... (Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, make sure you share that

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with us, okay?

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You did... We did!

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We have, uhm... (Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For the new members,

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they've gotten it. I've been here... I've been

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2 holding meetings with the new members. I already did
3 The Bronx. I think Staten Island was scheduled.
4 And, Manhattan is ready.

5 But, it's so that they can get familiar with the
6 senior services in their areas. So, we created a
7 map, and then we overlaid that map of senior services
8 throughout the city with council member districts.
9 So, that a council member could look at which are the
10 services in their particular area. And, it is
11 wonderful to say that those stars are now no longer
12 places that need services, but a lot of those stars
13 are with services included now. And, that's what I
14 can give you at this point.

15 But, I just want to be real clear that the
16 conversation is about expansion, TRIE, and narrowing
17 service gaps. This never was to increase people's
18 budget. The long established communities, they have
19 done excellent work. We honor their work. But, this
20 was not to increase budgets in that direction. This
21 was to narrow gaps and address historic inequities.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Great. I mean, I... As soon
23 as you are allowed to share that information...

24 (Cross-Talk)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You will be...

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(Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: with us, I would love to see, you know, the lists and all that you talked (Cross-Talk)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You will get...

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: about...

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: that... You will get that list. Before you and I say, Happy New Year, you will have that list.

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I've been... As a matter of fact, I think you'll have it way before that. But, yes.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Is there any other... Because, I remember we had a conversation that was... There might be some, uh, districts that... that might not have gotten, uhm... (Cross-Talk)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, yes, thank you very much. There were... There are four districts, thank you for that... (Cross-Talk)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And for triggering my poor memory.

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There were four districts that we will RFP, because of the RFP's that were received for those

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2 areas, uhm, did not meet those conditions that we
3 talked about -- TRIE, and ,you know, , uhm, and some
4 of the other conditions. And, that was for Crown
5 Heights, uhm, there is one in Queens, uhm, in Queens,
6 and there was another one in Harlem, and there's a
7 fourth one, and it is escaping me. I'm so sorry,
8 Chairwoman Chin, I'll... I'll, uh, I'll get back to
9 you. But, there were four areas. And, uhm, and,
10 we'll look at that. And, as people decide, you know,
11 about their future contracts, there may be more.
12 But, uh, we'll... Right now that's what we know.
13 And, those RFPs will be released in January for July
14 startup.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Great. Now... (Cross-Talk)

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay... (Cross-
17 Talk)

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you very much. Yeah, I
19 am looking forward to really, uhm, ,you know, seeing
20 that information, and really celebrating, uh, the
21 achievement that we have done together, uh, with you
22 as a great partner, The Deputy Mayor, and also with
23 ,you know, HPD, and with NYCHA. We have... I mean,
24 looking back, we have done so much improvement. I
25 know early, early, uh, test... uh, hearings, uhm,

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2 addressed, you know, they identified all of the
3 issues, all the problems, and we tried to address
4 them. And, I'm really looking forward to, uh...

5 (Cross-Talk)

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, I... And,
7 we've done that... We've done that in partnership.
8 It doesn't... It takes... For government to work,
9 you need community, you need government, alright, and
10 you need legislators. And, that's what makes this
11 work. Uhm, and it was the combination of all of
12 those. We wouldn't have had the home delivered meals
13 increase had it not been for you, Deputy Mayor
14 Herzog, who was not letting it go, uh, as well as...
15 I'm telling you Jeremy, who testified... (Cross-
16 Talk)

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uhm, Ben Thomas, who
19 has never... I mean, I, if I talked to Ben Thomas
20 any more about this issue, I think maybe that's the
21 most conversations we have. And, to Rabi Wiener, you
22 know, who were... who we're very clear, we want to
23 give better services. And, the way we do that
24 particularly with the cost of inflation now, is we
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need an increase. And, we can't thank you enough for making that possible.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And also the advocates. I mean, LiveOn, uh... (Cross-Talk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, and the advocates. Of course... (Cross-Talk)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, then all of them that just keep on reminding us and making sure that we don't forget even after we have voted on the budget, that we still have to address some of these outstanding issues. So... (Cross-Talk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, and... (Cross-Talk)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Commissioner, I... (Cross-Talk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE 01:57:31) to continue.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes. And, I wish you the very best.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We will see each other personally, and uh... (Cross-Talk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, yes!

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, I will have more time for
3 tea and coffee... (Cross-Talk)

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, we will...
5 (Cross-Talk)

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But, I just... (Cross-Talk)

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For good ginger tea.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, the other
10 thing is, and you will have this information in
11 detail, uh, as soon as is possible. Alright? I...
12 (Cross-Talk)

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's a commitment
15 to you.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Great, thank you very much.
17 And, I really wanted to thank, uh, everyone for
18 testifying today. For, uhm, HPD, Deputy Commissioner
19 Ahmed... (Cross-Talk)

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: (INAUDIBLE 01:58:08) we worked
22 on the council together, oh, what a big title!

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I love him!

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, both the V.P.'s from the,
25 uh, from NYCHA. And, Commissioner and your team,

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2 uhm, I really appreciate all of the great work that
3 everyone has done. You know, our hearts are in the
4 right place. And, sometimes with government, things
5 don't work as quickly as people, uhm, want them to.
6 Uhm, but we try to do our very best. And, I really
7 appreciate the partnership and all of the great work.

8 So, thank you again for being here today. And,
9 uh, I guess we're going to... (Cross-Talk)

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, give much
11 (INAUDIBLE 01:58:44) to Council Member Vallone. I
12 will... (Cross-Talk)

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah... (Cross-Talk)

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I will miss that
15 partnership also. And, Ayala... (Cross-Talk)

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, Council Member Vallone
17 had to leave early, and I also really, uh, told him
18 personally that he's... (Cross-Talk)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: been a great partner in these
21 past eight years that we've worked together, uhm, to
22 really achieve all of these, uh, increases in budget
23 and programs. So, I really appreciate Council Member
24 Vallone very much. And, hopefully Council Member

25

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2 Ayala, Council Member Brook-Powers will... (Cross-
3 Talk)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, the other...
The other strong advocates... (Cross-Talk)

6

7

8

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Pass the torch! You know, they
will carry on and make sure that this, uh, the effort
continues.

9

10

And, uh, so, thank you again, and I am going to
turn back to our moderator.

11

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

12

MODERATOR: Thank you, Chair.

13

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15

Seeing that there are no more additional
questions from council members, we will begin public
testimony.

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The first panel of public testimony, in order of
speaking, will be Katelyn Andrews of LiveOn NY,
followed by Alex Ryley of The Legal Aid Society,
Kevin Jones of AARP, and Chris Widelo of The New York
State Association for Affordable Housing.

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22

I'd like to remind everyone that I will begin
calling individuals one by one to testify.

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Each panelist will be given three minutes to
speak. Please begin your testimony once the Sergeant
has started the timer.

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Council Members who have questions for a particular panelist should use the Zoom Raise Hand Function, and I will call on you in the order your hand is raised, after the panelist has completed their testimony.

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For panelist, once your name is called, a member of our staff will unmute you, and the Sergeant At Arms will set the timer then give you the go ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may begin before delivering your testimony.

12

I will now call on Katelyn Andrews.

13

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14

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KATELYN ANDREWS: Hello, my name is Katelyn Andrews, I'm the Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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First I want to share my deep appreciation for the announcement that was made during this hearing that rates for home delivered meals will increase to \$10.52 in January and \$11.78 in July. This is something that LiveOn NY and our network has long advocated for alongside Council Member Chin and the council. And, it is a significant win that will make a meaningful difference in the lives of older adults throughout the five boroughs.

1
2 Second, as evidenced by securing that one last
3 HDM win, we want to give our deepest appreciation to
4 Councilwoman Chin, for your final hearing.

5 Council Member Chin, you have fought tirelessly
6 for older adults throughout the duration of your time
7 as Chair of the Aging Committee. Your leadership,
8 and that of the entire committee and council, has
9 positively impacted the lives of older New Yorkers
10 across the five boroughs, and we thank you for your
11 time and energy in this fight.

12 Now, to get to the topic at hand. As we continue
13 to emerge from a pandemic that further demonstrated
14 the importance of having a safe place to call to
15 home, it's critical that the city respond by renewing
16 and expanding its commitment to addressing the city's
17 affordable housing crisis.

18 Today, more than half of older renters are rent
19 burdened. And, a number of older adults in homeless
20 shelters is expected to triple by 2030 without
21 significant intervention.

22 These realities make it critical that we utilize
23 every tool in our toolbox to combat the crisis; from
24 developing affordable senior housing with services to
25

1
2 repairing NYCHA, to bolstering SCRIE, to optimizing
3 our zoning code, we need to do it all.

4 Examples of what can be done when we work hard
5 and prioritize affordable senior housing are
6 evidenced in a newly developed affordable senior
7 housing that exist throughout the city.

8 The Tres Puentes Building in The Bronx, developed
9 by Westside Federation, is home to a vibrant new
10 senior center.

11 HANAC Corona in Queens showcases new energy
12 efficiency standards.

13 SAGE's Ingersoll and Corona residences in The
14 Bronx and Brooklyn, spearheaded the new LGBTQ+
15 affirming housing model.

16 These developments, and many others, show not
17 Olney what is possible in supporting the lives of
18 hundreds of older residents, but that affordable
19 senior housing can be assets to the entire community
20 in which they've serve. It's a win-win.

21 So, to build on this, and to address the other
22 issues that we have discussed during this hearing,
23 including the important issues within NYCHA, which is
24 an extremely important piece of housing older New
25 Yorkers, I want to jump to our recommendations.

1
2 First, LiveOn NY asks that the city implement the
3 housing recommendations gathered in the more than
4 eighty communities... gathered by more than eighty
5 company based organizations outlined in our united
6 for housing report. That means developing more than
7 a thousand senior housing units per year, for
8 extremely low income older adults.

9 We also need to amend the zoning code in order to
10 integrate ADU's more fully at the caregiving model of
11 support... (Cross-Talk)

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

13 KATELYN ANDREWS: Additionally, we need we need
14 additional capital funding for public housing, and we
15 need to continue to strengthen the SCRIE Program.
16 There are a number of state bills that I will include
17 in my written testimony that can be supported to do
18 just this.

19 Finally, we also need to increase the per unit
20 reimbursement rate within SARA to ensure that service
21 funding is appropriately available within new SARA
22 residences.

23 And, with that, I'll stop.
24
25

1

2 And thank you again for your time, Council Member
3 Chin, not only in this hearing, but throughout your
4 tenure as Chair.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, Katelyn. Uh, thank
7 you to LiveOn. I still remember, we started this
8 whole push for affordable housing for seniors based
9 on your study, you know, showing that they were,
10 like, back then, I think it was like 200,000 seniors
11 on waiting list. And, I think that really got the
12 ball rolling. So, but all the advocacy from LiveOn
13 and your predecessors who we... I really, uh,
14 appreciate all of your support. And, all of these
15 victories, you guys will really... I mean, you and
16 your organization have really helped to push it
17 forward.

18 Thank you... (Cross-Talk)

19 KATELYN ANDREWS: Thank you. My first year was
20 the year of the senior. So, it's been good since
21 then.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, thank you.

23 MODERATOR: Thank you, Katelyn.

24 I will now call on Alex Ryley.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 ALEX RYLEY: Thank you very much. Uh, thanks to
3 Council Member Chin and the committee for, uh,
4 convening this hearing on such an important topic.

5 Uhm, I am Alex Ryley Director of Elder Law Civil
6 Practice at The Legal Aid Society.

7 I want to start by talking about something that,
8 uh, someone at The Department for The Aging, uhm,
9 staff spoke about at some length, and that, uh, Chair
10 Chin, you had asked at least one question about,
11 which is the Assigned Counsel Project.

12 Uhm, so, The Legal Aid Society has been one of
13 the legal providers for the Assigned Counsel Project
14 since its inception. I don't know exactly how long
15 it's been around -- maybe fifteen years -- something
16 like that. And, uh, we agree that this is a really
17 crucial project. It a crucial program to help keep
18 seniors in their homes. Because, as Ygnacio
19 Silvestre said, so many, uh, housing court cases stem
20 from social services problems. And, without some
21 sort of social work intervention, uh, those problems
22 go unresolved, and then the senior winds up back in
23 housing court.

24 Uh, but I do want to mention a couple of things,
25 sort of clarifications of what was said earlier.

1
2 First of all, uhm, it's important to understand
3 the DFTA social work component of the ACP exist only
4 in Brooklyn and Manhattan. There is no DFTA ACP
5 component in The Bronx, uh, or in Queens. So, to the
6 extent that any social work intervention is being
7 done, the legal services providers have to come up
8 with the funding to get that work done or find help
9 elsewhere.

10 Uh, another thing I wanted to mention is that,
11 uh, Ygnacio Silvestre emphasized the short term
12 nature of the social work intervention in these
13 cases, and that's very important to understand,
14 because some of these cases, uh, really require long-
15 term intervention. Uh, the... Some of these cases
16 involving nuisance allegations are settled with what
17 are called probationary agreements where the client
18 is supposed to engage or not engage in certain
19 behavior for a couple of years. Uhm, and you really
20 need social work intervention during that period of
21 time, but DFTA won't provide it, because the ACP is
22 set up to be a short term crisis intervention
23 program. So, that aspect of the program is missing
24 really.

1
2 Uhm, in addition, the, uh, DFTA used to solely
3 administer this project along with the court system.
4 But, that changed in, I believe it was 2018, when HRA
5 and OCJ came in and started administering the
6 program. And, since then, we've been concerned that
7 the... that there's been sort of a less... less of
8 an emphases or appreciation of the program.

9 I will tell you that, uhm, as of July 1st of
10 2021, uhm, HRA announced that, uh, contrary to what
11 had happened for many years previously where all
12 sorts of different types of housing cases would be
13 referred to legal services providers through the ACP,
14 only nuisance cases would be referred. We were
15 concerned about that for various reasons, but we're
16 even more concerned now, because, at least in
17 Brooklyn, the flow of cases has ground almost
18 completely to a halt.

19 Uh, since July 1st, uh, Legal Aid Brooklyn, we've
20 received maybe five - six referrals for that entire
21 five-month period, uhm, of ACP cases. And, I've
22 checked with my counterpart and Legal Services, which
23 is the other provider, and they've had the same
24 experience.
25

1
2 Uhm, so that is of obvious concern to us. What
3 we would hope is that the committee would work with
4 HRA and DFTA to reverse that trend, to increase the
5 scope of the project, uhm; to increase the social
6 services element beyond Brooklyn and Manhattan;
7 increase the scope of eligible cases beyond that
8 narrow category of nuisance cases; and to increase
9 the scope of the social services support generally
10 from short term crisis, uh, to longer term social
11 work support in appropriate instances.

12 I also wanted to say something about, uh, finding
13 housing for seniors more generally. There was
14 mention of Housing Connect earlier. So, we're seeing
15 two problems, uhm, and have for a long time.

16 The first is seniors who need help finding
17 housing immediately not finding subsidized housing,
18 for which there is, you know, a waiting list of
19 years. Uhm, seniors have nowhere to turn for this
20 assistance. You know, we have clients who think that
21 the way to find housing is to walk around your
22 neighborhood and look in windows to see signs about
23 vacant apartments. They're totally unequipped to
24 find apartments the way one has to do it now by doing
25 internet searches.

1

2 And, then, as I believe, you, uh, Chair Chin, you
3 were saying earlier, uhm with respect to the
4 subsidized housing, seniors are always amazed to find
5 that waiting lists are so long. But, there are other
6 sources of amazement. Uhm, they're also amazed to
7 find that there's no one to help with these types of
8 searches. I know that there is the Ambassador
9 Program, but that's quite limited.

10 Uhm, in my written testimony, you will see that
11 this morning, I did a number of searches on the
12 internet as if I was applying or trying to find
13 senior housing. First thing I did was to go to The
14 Housing Connect Portal, and I pretended that I was a
15 single, older adult of household income of \$12,000 a
16 year, and it turned up zero responses. There was
17 nothing. Nothing for me to apply to at all.

18 Uh, I looked at other sites for housing
19 providers, uh, New York Foundation for Seniors, JASA,
20 uhm, another problem is that if you want to apply to
21 these places, as you probably know, there's no
22 central way to do it. You... For JASA's, or rather
23 New Yorker Foundations, I think, uh, seven properties
24 that are currently accepting applications, you
25 have... You would have to submit a separate

1

2 application for each property. And, there's all
3 sorts of dire warnings about if you submit two by
4 accident, you'll be put to the bottom of the list.
5 Or, for JASA, you'll be disqualified entirely.

6

Uhm, this is very complicated. Many of our
7 clients are totally unable to do this sort of thing
8 on their own. And, there's nowhere to send them.
9 Again, there's The Ambassador Program, but our
10 understanding is that that focuses on what shows up
11 in Housing Connect, and, uh, for the person I just
12 mentioned, the fictitious single person with \$12,000
13 a year in income, that, uh, there are... Absolutely
14 nothing comes up at all.

15

Uhm, so, thank you, uh, once again, I hope that
16 the city will find a way to put resources both toward
17 expanding the ACP, uhm, and to getting critical
18 assistance to seniors with finding immediate housing
19 solutions, and also more long-term subsidized
20 housing. Because, as the, uh, the January 15th, uhm,
21 end of the moratorium looms, uh, we're getting very
22 worried about what this is going to look like.

23

Happy to take any questions.

24

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Thank you, Alex
25 for, uh, all of your great work all these years.

1

2 And, uh, hopefully the committee, you know, council
3 will also take note of this, and make sure that the
4 next council, the next Committee Chair, will have all
5 this information. We really appreciate all of the
6 work that you have done, and coming to testify, and,
7 uh, and thank you.

8

ALEX RYLEY: Thank you.

9

MODERATOR: Thank you, Alex.

10

I will now call on Kevin Jones.

11

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12

13 KEVIN JONES: Good morning Chair Chin and members
14 of the Committee on Aging. My name is Kevin Jones and
15 I am the Associate State Director for Advocacy at
16 AARP New York, we represent 750,000 members of the
17 50+ community across New York City.

18

19 Thank you for providing AARP with the opportunity
20 to testify at today's hearing to discuss the state of
21 housing for older New Yorkers.

22

23 As many of you know, older adults are one of the
24 fastest growing demographics in New York City and
25 will continue to make up a larger portion of the
City's entire population in the years ahead as more
New Yorkers desire to age in their communities and
neighborhoods.

1
2 However, our members and other 50+ New Yorkers,
3 of all income levels and backgrounds, have identified
4 housing affordability as one of their primary
5 concerns and fear that rising housing costs will
6 impact their ability to age in their communities now
7 and in the future.

8 According to a 2016 retirement preparedness
9 survey that AARP conducted with middle class Baby
10 Boomers and "Gen Xer" populations across New York,
11 more than 70 percent of this group stated that
12 housing costs were having a serious impact on their
13 household's overall financial health, and 61 percent
14 of the "Gen Xers" indicated that they planned to move
15 from New York in the future due to the issue of
16 housing affordability.

17 Over the past two decades, we have witnessed New
18 York City's affordable housing crisis continue to
19 grow worse and place a significant burden on the
20 lives and wellbeing of 50+ New Yorkers, especially
21 low-income older adults. This crisis will continue to
22 threaten this population's ability to age with
23 dignity in their communities in the future without
24 sufficient action from our leaders in government.
25

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2 The New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey of
3 2018 identified that more than 44 percent of all
4 renter households in New York City are rent burdened,
5 and 25 percent of those households are severely rent-
6 burdened, meaning that they pay at least half of
7 their income on rent. This study also found that low-
8 income seniors -- adults above the age of 60 -- make
9 up a disproportionate share of severely rent-burdened
10 households, as more than 30 percent of all senior
11 households and 35 percent of single seniors were
12 identified as low income and severely rent burdened.

13 The COVID-19 pandemic and financial fallout from
14 the crisis, have further complicated and worsened New
15 York City's affordable housing crisis for older
16 adults.

17 As a result of COVID-19, many older New Yorkers
18 have struggled to keep up with their rent or mortgage
19 payments due to the loss of their employment or the
20 loss of a spouse or loved one in their household.

21 Although some neighborhoods saw brief dips in
22 housing prices at the height of the pandemic, New
23 York City has witnessed a surge in the cost for
24 housing over the past few months to such an extent
25

1
2 that it has become the most expensive rental markets,
3 again, in the United States.

4 As New York City continues in its recovery from
5 the COVID-19 pandemic, we need our elected leaders to
6 implement policies and programs that protect older
7 New Yorkers from losing their homes, especially as
8 the future of the State's Eviction Moratorium remains
9 uncertain beyond January 2022, as well as policies
10 that address many of the underlying issues that have
11 contributed to New York City's affordability crisis
12 and left large portions of our aging population
13 vulnerable to housing instability for years.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time Expired.

15 KEVIN JONES: Uh, I am going to submit it writing,
16 a list of recommendations, but I just want to, uh,
17 echo, uhm, AARP's appreciation for all of the work
18 that's done by this committee over the last years,
19 and particularly, Chairwoman Chin, it's been a
20 pleasure to work with you.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, yeah, thank you, for
22 all of the support and partnership of AARP, all of
23 the advocacy here at City Hall, with your red t-
24 shirts at all of the hearings. I truly appreciated
25 it.

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Thank you for being here today.

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KEVIN JONES: Absolutely, Thank You.

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MODERATOR: Thank you, Kevin, I will now call in
Chris Widelo.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

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CHRIS WIDELO: Hi, good afternoon, Chairwoman
Chin, and members of The Aging Committee. Thank you,

9

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify on

10

housing older adults here in New York City. My name

11

is Chris Widelo and I am the director of external

12

affairs of NYSAFAH.

13

Uh, Chairwoman, I just wanted to say what a

14

pleasure it's been to work with you over the years,

15

and I just want to wish you the best of luck in your

16

"what's next". So, thank you.

17

So, NYSAFAH is the trade association for the

18

affordable housing industry here in New York. We have

19

375 members both for-profit and non-profit

20

developers, lenders, investors, attorneys, architects

21

-- all of the components that go in to building

22

affordable housing.

23

We are responsible for building most of the

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affordable housing that is here New York State and

25

across the city.

1
2 Uh, I don't think I have to belabor the, uh,
3 aging statistics, but we know that we are going to
4 continue to age. The city is continually, uh,
5 getting older. And, uh, you know, older adults
6 account for over 13 percent of the population. And,
7 you know, the last Boomer won't finish turning 65
8 until nine years from now in 2030.

9 So, uh, we need to do more, and figure out ways
10 that we can produce the affordable housing and
11 preserve the affordable housing to keep our older
12 adults with a roof over their head.

13 And, ,you know, I want to echo what LiveOn NY
14 proposed as part of the United for Housing Coalition,
15 is a group of eighty organizations that came together
16 to come up with recommendations for the next
17 administration.

18 I think one of the ways that we can push the
19 envelope, uh, to greater density, is to institute a
20 citywide affordable housing zoning bonus of 25
21 percent as-of-right floor area ratio, to enable to
22 affordable housing projects to achieve that higher
23 density and compete against market-rate development.
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In the next administration we know can do this by expanding the given benefit through AIRS, and hopefully create more units in that way.

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I also wanted to just mention that one of the initiatives that we have, you know, for older adults to age in place, we needed to make sure that they're connected, and this pandemic really showed us that that can be limited, especially when you can't get out and around to, you know, see others and connect with services in person. And, so, uh, you know, we have found that over 60 percent of older adults struggle to access adorable high-speed internet. And, so we had launched our Digital Equity Initiative back in 2020, and we're working in partnership with the Ford Foundation, Schmitt Futures, and the Broadband Equity Partnership to map out all of the affordable housing across the state and, of course, here in New York City to determine, uh, what their connectivity is. Do they have fiber that runs through the building, and if not, what is needed to do that? And, uhm, our goal, now that we've done that, we are going to be looking to see how we can leverage federal funding to make sure that all affordable

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2 housing in New York City, and across the state, has a
3 connection to fiber, so they can... (Cross-Talk)

4

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5

6 CHRIS WIDELO: Uh, people have access to high
7 speed, uh, internet access. And, we will work with
8 our partners at New York State to leverage additional
9 federal broadband dollars to, uhm, make sure that
10 there is digital literacy programs in all affordable
11 housing, and, ,you know, so we can make sure that
12 people are connected. We know that older adults who
13 are accessing the internet in ways they probably
14 never thought of before; although, they are certainly
15 digitally literate than maybe my parents 'generation,
16 uhm, and we need to make sure that, uhm, that is not
17 an issue again.

17

18

19

So, as far as affordable housing goes, we are
looking to close that digital divide and make it a
place where people can age successfully.

20

So, thank you very much for your time.

21

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, Chris.

22

23

24

Uhm, yeah, hopefully, I know a lot of seniors
that were... at least had the opportunity to learn
how to use, uh, the computer... (Cross-Talk)

25

CHRIS WIDELO: Sure.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, get on Zoom and stay

3

(Background Noise) (INAUDIBLE 02:20:52) program.

4

And, really, thank you, too, uh, for all of your

5

advocacy and partnership, even at... During when you

6

were with AARP.

7

CHRIS WIDELo: Yes! Thank you.

8

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, uh, I'm glad that right

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now you are with... Uh, are also involved with

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another great organization that focuses on affordable

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housing. So, we appreciate... (Cross-Talk)

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CHRIS WIDELo: Thank you, I always try to bring up

13

ageing... (Cross-Talk)

14

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: all of your support.

15

CHRIS WIDELo: the aging lens to, uh, to this

16

work, here, so, thank you very much.

17

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: That's good. That's good. And,

18

thank you for being here today.

19

MODERATOR: Thank you, Chris.

20

I will now call on Joseph Condon.

21

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22

JOSEPH CONDON: Uh, Thank you for the opportunity

23

to testify today. My name is Joseph Condon. I am

24

testifying on behalf of the Community Housing

25

Improvement Program, also known as CHIP.

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2 CHIP members are long-term owners of rent-
3 stabilized housing. Uh, they have good relationships
4 with their tenants, and they've become part of the
5 communities in which they provide housing.

6 Uh, Chair Member Chin, thank you for the
7 opportunity. We've tried to work together before,
8 so, uhm, thank you for all of those past attempts.

9 Uh, today, I'm here to sort of talk about the
10 experiences our housing providers have had with their
11 tenants who are seniors, uh, particular, in their
12 assistance in helping them participate in the SCRIE
13 Program, which is the Senior Citizen Rent Increase
14 Exemption Program.

15 Uh, the SCRIE Program freezes tenant's rents at
16 the time of the application, and all future rent
17 increases for that unit area paid by the city through
18 deductions in the building's property taxes. Uh,
19 it's an excellent program to assist seniors on a
20 fixed incomes in being able to age in their
21 communities where they have friends and relatives,
22 and are familiar with the neighborhood.

23 Unfortunately, sometimes the administration of
24 the program, by The Department of Finance, is often
25 filled with errors or mistakes, and cause

1
2 difficulties for both the owners of the buildings as
3 well as the tenants themselves.

4 Uhm, this testimony today is just to bring two
5 recent issues with the SCRIE program to your
6 attention.

7 First, ever since the passage of the 2019 HSTPA,
8 the Department of Finance has been reducing the SCRIE
9 benefits received by tenants with preferential rents,
10 and increasing the amount these tenants actually pay
11 in rent.

12 Uh, whether it is an unintended consequence of
13 the 2019 HSTPA, or administrative mistakes at the
14 Department of Finance, uh, what we're seeing on the
15 ground and what seniors seeing is, uh, in some
16 instances, their rents are increasing under the SCRIE
17 Program, simply because they had a preferential rent
18 in place, uhm, and attempted to renew it. Uhm, I can
19 get in to more detail, and there's more detail in my
20 written testimony about, uh, the issues happening
21 there.

22 Uh, secondly, I just wanted to raise another
23 issue that we're seeing with the SCRIE recipients.
24 Uh, in some instances when they are renewing their
25 benefits due to receipt of increased unemployment

1
2 benefits, either during 2020 or 2021, uh, it is
3 causing issues in the recertification portion here.
4 Uh, it's actually causing them to lose their benefits
5 on renewal. Uh, it's due to the income cap on
6 eligibility for SCRIE tenants as well as the rent
7 burden requirement that they face. Seniors must be
8 paying at least one-third of their income towards
9 rent in order to qualify. Uh, so the receipt of the
10 increased unemployment benefits is pushing seniors
11 above these thresholds. And, although tenants are
12 being instructed to reapply once those insurance
13 benefits, uh, lapse or are no longer being received,
14 uh, what that would do is cause the tenants to...

15 (Cross-Talk)

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 JOSEPH CONDON: lose their frozen rent, and in
18 reapplying, it would set a new rent at the current
19 amount, even though income would return to pre-
20 unemployment benefit levels.

21 Uh, so just wanted to raise these two issues for
22 the committee, uhm, we know there's not much time
23 left in the... in this year's session, but
24 certainly, uhm, for next year and anything that can

25

1

2 be done in the meantime, uhm, it would be very
3 helpful to the recipients of the SCRIE benefits.

4

Uhm, so, that's it. Thank you for your time
5 today. And, I looking for to, uh, working with this
6 committee in the future. And, uh, well wishes to
7 Chair Chin on, uhm, your future as well.

8

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Thank you, Joseph.
9 Uhm, ,you know, if there are people who are caught in
10 that system, uh, they're having issues with SCRIE,
11 uh, let us know or have them contact their council
12 member. Because, we do work with The Department of
13 Finance to try to resolve these SCRIE problems. So,
14 I think every council member's office does have staff
15 that work with seniors and on these programs. So,
16 they should definitely reach out, and we could see
17 how we could be helpful.

18

JOSEPH CONDON: Okay, will do, thank you.

19

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay? Thank you.

20

MODERATOR: Thank you, Chair. Uhm, we do have a
21 panelist with a hand raised -- Alex Ryley. Can...

22

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, yeah, Alex... (Cross-Talk)

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ALEX RYLEY: Thank... Thank you very much. I
24 just wanted to, uh, to build on what Mr. Condon was
25 saying about the SCRIE issues.

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2 With the unemployment insurance, uhm, piece, I
3 have not encountered yet, but I'm glad to know about
4 it. Well, I'm certainly going to take that back to
5 my colleague and others. But, we are very much aware
6 of the preferential rent issue.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm

8 ALEX RYLEY: Uh, this does seem to have been a...
9 an unintended consequence of the HSTPA, which made
10 all preferential rents permanent.

11 We had a meeting with, uh, The Department of
12 Finance a month or two ago on this issue, and they
13 committed, uh, first of all that they would... Uh,
14 in some instances we've been able to get them to, so
15 to speak, fix this problem in individual cases, and
16 they committed to doing so on a case by case bases.

17 Uhm, the problem is that it's impossible for the
18 DOF to identify these cases on its own, uhm, with
19 their existing records. So, they have to be brought
20 their attention.

21 We also wanted them to do outreach on this
22 issue, because it's kind of a complicated issue, and
23 our experience has been that the clients have reached
24 out to various elected official's offices that
25 haven't really known what to do about the problem,

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2 because it's sort of strange. And, the issues kind
3 of go nowhere.

4 So, we wanted the DOF to do outreach. I sent an
5 email to them a couple of weeks ago asking, once
6 again, are you going to do this? No response. So,
7 to the extent that the committee could press The
8 Department of Finance to get in front of this and
9 start alerting everyone about this issue -- which is
10 pretty easy to spot -- because as Mr. Condon said,
11 you know, it's when you have somebody who has a
12 preferential rent, and all of a sudden, one day their
13 SCRIE practically disappears, then you know you have
14 that issue.

15 So, if the DOF could do outreach on that, I think
16 that would be great step in the right direction.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, thank you for your
18 suggestion. I know, our office has, uh, cases that
19 came in that had this issue and the staff had to
20 reach out to DOF to try to get it resolved. So, we
21 will... we will follow up on that.

22 Thank you for your suggestion.

23 Committee Counsel?

24 MODERATOR: Yes, thank you, Chair.

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So, at this time, if your name has not been called, and you still wish to testify, please raise your hand using the Zoom Raise Hand Function.

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Okay, Chair Chin, we have concluded public testimony for this hearing, and I will now turn it back to you for closing remarks.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, I just wanted to, UH, you know, thank you again, to everyone who participated at this hearing. And, thank you for all your advocacy all of these years for older adults. You know, we have made big progress, and hopefully the committee in the next, uh, session will continue to build on our achievements.

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And, I want to thank all of the sergeants for helping us organize the hearing today.

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And, Happy Holidays to everyone.

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The hearing is now adjourned. **[GAVEL]**

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Thank you.

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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 January 5, 2022