

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE
ON IMMIGRATION

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May 6, 2026
Start: 10:08 a.m.
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing
Room 2

B E F O R E: Shanel Thomas-Henry,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Small Business

Elsie Encarnación,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Immigration

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés
Gale A. Brewer
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Shahana K. Hanif
Kamillah Hanks
Shekar Krishnan
Rita C. Joseph
Virginia Maloney
Frank Morano
Yusef Salaam
Kayla Santosuosso

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

Haris Khan
Department of Small Business Services

Lorena Lucero
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Brad Hoylman-Sigal
Manhattan Borough President

Mark Caserta
Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Van Xelo
Mixteca

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Queens Economic Development Corporation

Rosario Troncoso
Street Vendor Project

Ysabel Rosario
Street Vendor Project

Martha Herrera
Las Doñas

Sally Weathers
Street Vendor Project

Ahyoung Kim
Asian American Federation

Carlyn Cowen
Chinese American Planning Council

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

Jackie Harington
Digital Deep Divide Corporation

Hasan Shafiqullah
Legal Aid Society

Roberto Beltre
Self

Christopher Leon Johnson
Self

Melissa Chu
New York Legal Assistance Group, NYLAG

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, this is a mic
3 check for the Committee on Small Business. Today's
4 date is May 6th, 2026. We are located in Hearing
5 Room 2, and this is being recorded by Mike Kane.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, ladies and
7 gentlemen. Welcome to the New York City Council
8 hearing for the Committee on Small Business, joint
9 with the Committee on Immigration. At this time, I'd
10 like to remind everyone to please silence all devices
11 and at no point during the hearing may you approach
12 the dais.

13 If you wish to testify at today's hearing, please
14 see a Sergeant at the back of the room to fill out a
15 testimony slip. Chair, we are ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: [GAVEL] Okay, this
17 hearing is called to order. Good morning, everyone.
18 I am Council Member Shanel Thomas-Henry, Chair of the
19 Committee on Small Business. Thank you for joining
20 us today for today's joint hearing between the
21 Committee on Small Business and Committee on
Immigration to examine the economic impacts of
federal immigration policy changes.

I'd like to begin by thanking my Co-Chair, Deputy
Whip Elsie Encarnación. I'd like to also thank the

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1
2 representatives from the Administration, members of
3 the public, and my Council colleagues who have joined
4 us here today, including Council member Morano.

5 The work it takes to start and maintain a
6 business in New York City cannot be overstated.. It
7 is a noble and complex, complex endeavor to turn the
8 dream of a business into reality. And the commercial
9 corridors of New York City thrive because of this
10 entrepreneurial spirit. Our commercial corridors
11 also owe a lot to our immigrant entrepreneurs and
12 workers that help create and maintain our city's
13 small businesses.

14 In New York City, immigrant workers of all
15 statuses are common in small businesses, and almost
16 half of the city's businesses are owned by
17 immigrants. Navigating permits, licensing,
18 regulations, leases, and rent is complicated enough,
19 but the tenacity required to create and sustain a
20 small business in New York is being challenged
21 further by the xenophobic political landscape
currently being facilitated by the federal
government.

The seemingly lawless and violent activities of
Immigration and Customs Enforcement across the

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1 country and in our neighborhoods, including in my
2 district, have left immigrants terrified of leaving
3 their homes. Once bustling commercial corridors in
4 immigrant-majority enclaves across the city have
5 reported decreased foot traffic, and businesses in
6 these corridors also report workers opting to stay
7 home due to the fear of workplace raids. The effects
8 of the Trump Administration's immigration policies
9 extend well beyond these immigrant-majority
neighborhoods.

10 New York's hospitality, health, construction, and
11 agricultural industries rely heavily on immigrant
12 workers, especially undocumented immigrants, and
13 we've already begun to hear the challenges faced by
14 the industries due to the Administration's
immigration constraints and mass deportation agenda.

15 The whiplash caused by the termination or pauses
16 on immigration statuses that provide workforce
17 authorization complicates small business employment
18 abilities, and the recent decision by the Trump
19 Administration to ban any business owned by lawful
20 permanent residents or green card holders from
21 accessing Small Business Administration's guaranteed
loans could result in certain immigrant-owned

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businesses turning to unreliable and unsustainable capital.

Our small businesses and commercial corridors are suffering because of these xenophobic and chaotic federal immigration policy changes, and today's hearing seeks to understand what our small businesses need in the face of these challenges. Our immigrant community and our small business community are what make our city special. I look forward to hearing from the Administration on how we can collaborate to ensure that these communities continue to exist in New York City in- with dignity and safety.

I would like to thank Tyler Walls and Rebecca Barilla from central staff for their work putting this hearing together, as well as my own staff, Derek Slaughter, Franklin Richards, and Sierra Smith, and everyone working in the background to help make this hearing possible.

I would also like to point out that we have been joined by Council Member Hanks And Council Members Joseph and Hanif have joined us from Zoom. I will now turn it over to my Co-Chair, Council Member Encarnación, for her opening statement.

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CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, everyone. Good morning, everyone. Alright, we're here to help some people. Let's, let's, let's get energized. So I am Council Member Elsie Encarnación, Deputy Whip of the New York City Council, Chair on Immigration, uh, New York City at its core is a city of immigrants. Nearly 40% of the population was born outside of the United States, and many more workers are the children, grand-children, great-grandchildren of immigrants.

Our city has long been a global hub for creativity, opportunity, and economic growth, and immigrant communities past and present are central to that legacy. Immigrant New Yorkers play a vital role in our economy. They are the driving force in the workforce and a cornerstone of our small business community.

As my Co-Chair noted, immigrant-owned businesses make up nearly half of all the small businesses in New York City. Key industries including health care, agriculture, construction, and hospitality depend heavily on immigrant workers. Immigrants are not only workers, they are entrepreneurs, innovators, and

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1 job creators. They are essential to the strength and
2 resiliency of our city's economy.

3 At the same time, building a business or
4 sustaining a livelihood in New York City is already
5 challenging. Today, those challenges are being
6 compounded by a series of harmful and chaotic federal
7 policy decisions that directly target immigrant
8 communities. Across the country, we are seeing
9 immigration enforcement actions that are aggressive
and too often indiscriminate.

10 In our own city, there have been deeply troubling
11 arrests at court houses, busy streets, and
12 residential neighborhoods. Many of these so-called
13 collateral arrests are individuals that were detained
14 simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong
15 time. For many immigrants, including longtime New
16 Yorkers who came here in the pursuit of opportunity,
17 this has created a climate of fear and uncertainty.
What was meant to be the American dream has for some
become an American nightmare.

18 Families are afraid to leave their homes. People
19 with different immigration statuses are being caught
20 in shifting and often conflicting federal policies
and legal challenges. These policies have real

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1 economic consequences. Many immigration statuses are
2 tied directly to work authorization. When those
3 protections are removed or threatened, individuals
4 lose their ability to work and businesses lose valued
5 employees.

6 This instability harms not only immigrant
7 communities but also our small businesses and the
8 broader economic health of New York City. This is
9 why today's hearing is so important. I'm very
10 grateful to the Administration and to the members of
11 the public for joining us to discuss how we can
12 really respond to these challenges and better support
13 our immigrant communities and our small businesses
14 during this time of uncertainty.

15 I would like to thank my Committee Staff for
16 their work in preparing for today's hearing,
17 including Senior Legislative Counsel Nicole Catà,
18 Senior Legislative Policy Analyst Rebecca Barilla,
19 Principal Financial Analyst Navdeep Bains, and
20 Assistant Finance Director Florentine Kabore.

21 I also want to thank my staff, Deputy Chief of
Staff Stephanie Herrera, Legislative Director Adam
Neiman Bernstein, and everybody working behind the
scenes to ensure this hearing runs smoothly,

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1 including our incredible Sergeant at Arms. Um, I
2 will now turn it back to my Co-Chair, ah, to proceed.

3 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you, Council
4 Member Encarnación. I do want to make one
5 correction. We are joined by our Majority Whip,
6 Council Member Hanks. I will now turn it over to the
7 Committee Counsel to administer the oath before we
8 hear from the Mayor Administration.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chairs. We will
10 now hear testimony from the Administration. We will
11 hear from Haris Khan from the Department of Small
12 Business Services and Lorena Lucero from the Mayor's
13 Office of Immigrant Affairs.

14 Before we begin, I will administer the
15 affirmation. Panelists, please raise your right
16 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
17 truth, and nothing but the truth before these
18 committees, and to respond honestly to Council Member
19 questions?

20 PANEL: I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin
when ready.

HARIS KHAN: Thank you. Thank you so much. Good
morning, Chair Thomas-Henry, Chair Encarnación,

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1 Members of the City Council's Committees on Small
2 Business and on Immigration. My name is Haris Khan.
3 I serve as Chief of Staff at the New York City
4 Department of Small Business Services, and I'm
5 pleased to join today's hearing with Deputy
6 Commissioner Lorena Lucero from the Mayor's Office of
7 Immigrant Affairs.

8 At SBS, we aim to deliver economic security for
9 all New Yorkers, including immigrant New Yorkers, by
10 connecting them to good jobs, supporting small
11 businesses, and investing in our neighborhoods. More
12 than half of New York City's 180,000 small businesses
13 are owned by immigrants, including 56% of all
14 storefront businesses.

15 We recognize that heightened federal immigration
16 enforcement has increased fear and anxiety across
17 communities. And in response, SBS has continued our
18 efforts to prioritize outreach in immigrant
19 communities, circulate MOIA's Know Your Rights
20 collateral, which includes guidance regarding ICE
21 interactions, and MOIA's free legal assistance
hotline number.

Notably, 49% of New Yorkers speak a language
other than English at home, and 83– 23% are, uh, LEP.

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1 To ensure our services are reaching all corners of
2 New York, our dedicated outreach team canvasses small
3 businesses across commercial corridors. Our outreach
4 staff are fluent in 8 languages, and SBS provides
5 translated materials often in 20+ languages promoting
6 relevant business service offerings and workforce
7 opportunities. Our outreach is further supported by
8 600+ community partners, many of whom themselves have
9 deep ties to immigrant communities.

10 Since the launch of our outreach team, we've
11 engaged more than 70,000 New Yorkers through over
12 1,000 outreach events in all 5 boroughs and in dozens
13 of ethnic enclaves. From door-to-door support in
14 Chinatown to emergency response in Little Pakistan,
15 SBS's outreach model meets small businesses where
16 they are.

17 Our support also extends to street vendors, the
18 smallest of small businesses. SBS is proud to build
19 the, the city's first-ever Office of Street Vendor
20 Services to provide street vendors with education and
21 resources and the, and the city's support. We
welcomed Executive Director Carina Kaufman Gutierrez
earlier this week to advance this work. Um, and this
year alone, we've already reached over 500 street

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1 vendors, and we're excited to double down on this
2 outreach effort in the coming months as new licenses
3 are issued.

4 Federal immigration policy challenges— changes
5 have not just impacted immigrant New Yorkers through
6 enforcement actions. The Small Business
7 Administration at the federal government recently
8 made changes to exclude all but U.S. citizens and
9 U.S. nationals from applying to SBA-backed loans,
10 leaving behind a major gap in financing for small
11 businesses.

12 Despite this shift, SBS remains committed to
13 delivering our most in-demand services and
14 facilitating access to capital through our 7 business
15 solution centers, our NYC Funds Finder platform, and
16 city-led loan products. Under the leadership of
17 Mayor Mamdani, SBS revamped our NYC Future Fund to
18 expand access to affordable financing for seasonal
19 and growing small businesses by reducing interest
20 rates, reducing the minimum loan size, and reducing
21 the monthly repayment rates.

Small businesses can learn about the Future Fund
and a lot more at our— at the city's largest resource
fair for small businesses, the SBS Small Business

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1 Month Expo. It's happening on May 28th of this year,
2 and the event will feature language interpretation,
3 and will culminate a month of small business resource
4 programming. We'll have— we're expecting to have
5 2,500 attendees and dozens of resource providers. We
6 would greatly appreciate your support in promoting
7 Small Business Month programming, um, by visiting
8 nyc.gov/smallbizmonth.

9 Additionally, we believe the FIFA World Cup will
10 drive incredible foot traffic for the city's most
11 diverse communities, and SBS has been working closely
12 to coordinate with the Mayor's World Cup team and NYC
13 Tourism to promote small business engagement
14 opportunities through our FIFA World Cup mobile
15 outreach tour, where we're gonna bring MOBI into, uh,
16 corridors across the city through email newsletters
17 and small social media promotion of both the business
18 toolkit and a hosting playbook.

19 Our mobile unit outreach tour event dates that
20 will occur across all 5 boroughs, uh, are happening
21 on May 13th in Jackson Heights, May 15th in the
Bronx, May 19th in Little Haiti in Brooklyn, and on
May 22nd in Port Richmond in Staten Island. And May
26th in Koreatown in Manhattan, and we're planning

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1 for Little Senegal as well in, uh, Upper Manhattan,
2 um, and we're deciding on the date in the coming
3 days.

4 Thank you so much for this opportunity to talk
5 about SBS's work in support of immigrant
6 entrepreneurs during this trying time. I look
7 forward to our continued partnership to protect and
8 empower our immigrant communities and the businesses
9 that keep New York City running. Uh, we welcome any
questions you may have.

10 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Next. Oh, no, that's
11 okay. Thank you for your testimony. I would like to
12 welcome Council Members Maloney and Salaam. So I
13 will start with, uh, a couple of questions and then
turn it over to my colleagues.

14 So public reporting has shown that once bustling
15 commercial corridors have fallen quiet all over the
16 city as fears of ISIS presence persist in our
17 communities. How has SBS approached its work in
18 immigrant communities in light of the federal
immigration policy changes?

19 HARIS KHAN: Thank you, Chair. Um, it's— since
20 January of last year, we've definitely heard from
21 business leaders, community members, small business

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1 owners themselves of, ah,— real shift in commercial
2 activity that they're experiencing and perceiving on
3 the ground. And many of them are saying that it's
4 impacted their bottom line. They're seeing less
5 customers come in.

6 In some cases, they're even seeing workers that
7 are not showing up and some level of absenteeism
8 amongst the workforce. And so it's very concerning
9 and it's because of that reason that we've completely
10 been committed and are doubling down on our efforts
11 to reach immigrant New Yorkers, and none of that
12 commitment will ever shift and we're only doing more
13 in response to this. And, um, it's also the reason
14 why we have this upcoming mobile outreach unit tour
15 where we're particularly targeting and making sure
16 our services are accessible to the littles of New
17 York City.

18 So Little Chinatown, um, Little Pakistan, all the
19 littles that you can think of in New York City, those
20 are part of our priority, um, neighborhoods that we
21 wanna reach to ensure New Yorkers can get the
services that they need.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Has the team at SBS
kind of thought about it internally? Any ideas on

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1 how these commercial corridors can be, um, protected
2 or made active again? Like any-- in addition to the
3 littles program around FIFA, like, will that be an
4 ongoing summer program or how can we look forward to--

5 HARIS KHAN: So we, we haven't received, um,
6 what, what we know is this Administration was
7 committed to ensuring that there's, uh, we are able
8 to capture the economic opportunity that FIFA
9 presents. And so what we've been, uh, ensuring in
10 our conversations with the World Cup team, which is
11 led by the incredible Zar, Maya Honda, and also NYC
12 Tourism is to ensure that when they do begin
13 marketing campaigns across the city on FIFA and
14 they're promoting small businesses, they're promoting
15 small businesses in the neighborhoods that feature,
16 uh, immigrants of the countries that are represented
17 in the World Cup.

18 We have 48+ countries in the World Cup. New York
19 City is the one special place in this world where all
20 48 countries plus hundreds more countries, um, are
21 featured across commercial corridors, and we want to
make sure they're the ones that benefit.

So already, just as tourism has begun finalizing
their business toolkit, um, you may have heard and,

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1 and will definitely hear of, uh, there's a \$26
2 special, a 5-borough kind of tournament where
3 businesses can sign up if they offer a \$26 special
4 during the World Cup, can be featured on the tourism
5 website. Uh, there's a calendar of events that
6 tourism is preparing that businesses can submit into.
7 We are ensuring that all of that work is being
8 promoted and is reaching out.

9 So already in the past 2 weeks, we've reached
10 56,000 New Yorkers to promote those services and
11 opportunities to engage with the World Cup. Again,
12 it is one point in time. It is this summer. It's
13 between June and July. Um, we are committed wherever
14 we see opportunities that the Administration is
15 taking or, uh, opportunities that exist, we want to
16 ensure that that word is then going out into
17 immigrant communities across the city.

18 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Does that campaign
19 include door-to-door, like physically going to the
20 businesses, or is it predominantly online outreach?
21 What does the outreach of that campaign look like?

19 HARIS KHAN: To the degree that we, we- we've got
20 a small but mighty team. We have a roughly 6-person
21 outreach team for citywide outreach across the

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1 180,000 small businesses. So to the degree that
2 we're able to, we're, we're doing that. And the
3 dates that I mentioned in our testimony, the 5
4 borough tour where we're bringing our mobile outreach
5 unit, the truck, as well as the people, we're
6 tabling, we're gonna promote the tabling opportunity,
7 and we're gonna have our teams do canvassing of that
8 corridor. And that includes, like, in Port Richmond,
9 that's a community with a lot of Mexican immigrants
10 and other folks from Latin America, uh, in Little
11 Haiti, we're gonna, uh, speak to Haitian immigrants
12 and other Caribbean immigrants in, in that part of
13 Council Member Joseph's district. And so we're— and
14 in Little Senegal, we'll ensure we're speaking to
15 other immigrants of Black and African descent.

14 So we're really focused on ensuring it's not just
15 here's an email that goes out to thousands of
16 businesses, here's emails, here's our regular social
17 media drumbeat, here's a potential press opportunity,
18 here's us being in the field door knocking, and here
19 are a series of events in local communities that we'd
20 love, uh, and as they get finalized, we'll share
21 them. We have the dates.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Mhm.

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2 HARIS KHAN: We don't have the particular flyers
3 yet, but once they are finalized, we'll share them
4 with member offices as well. So we'd love to have
5 all of you featured in them and help to share.

6 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Yeah, I was just gonna
7 volunteer that. I can't speak for all my colleagues,
8 but my office will definitely be an extension, at
9 least for my district. Any tools that you have

10 HARIS KHAN: Yeah-

11 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Please give them and
12 we can be on the ground and talk to our businesses.

13 HARIS KHAN: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Um, and make sure they
15 don't miss out on this opportunity. Um, a couple
16 more questions. I'm gonna turn it over to my
17 colleagues for questions. I do want to mention that
18 we've been joined by Council Member Brewer.

19 Um, what challenges, if any, has SBS found that
20 small businesses face because of ICE presence in
21 immigrant communities specifically? So like, if you
have a top 5 that, um, businesses have said have been
the main hardship.

HARIS KHAN: Yeah Chair, I think it, it really
comes down to there's a fear and a real fear for

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1 personal safety that's emerged. Uh, as an immigrant
2 New Yorker myself, that fear is very real to me. Um,
3 and then there's a fear of the business and how the
4 business is doing. And for many immigrant New
5 Yorkers that are small business owners and
6 entrepreneurs, for them, this is the pathway to some
7 level of self-sufficiency, and other traditional
8 pathways may not exist as easily for them.

9 And so for them, having this pathway be
10 jeopardized by business, um, being lower than usual
11 by having a sense and a perception that less
12 customers are approaching that business, it really
13 creates significant anxiety in whether they can make
14 it, um, in the city. And it's on the customer side
15 and it's also on the workforce side. When you run
16 this business, uh, employee retention is huge. You
17 don't want to continuously be looking for people.
18 You want to be able to— and as a former business
19 owner, you know this yourself.

20 And so the twin challenges of, uh, the business
21 side, the demand and customers not showing up as much
as they used to, which is what we've heard from
business leaders and community members. And then on
the other side, the, uh, the, the challenge this has

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1 created with employee retention since some— there is
2 some level of worker absenteeism that we've, uh,
3 heard and seen.

4 So it's those two challenges that keep emerging
5 in some of the conversations we've had with community
6 members.

7 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: One more before I turn
8 it over to my Co-Chair. Does SBS have a sense of how
9 this change in immigration policy might affect the
economic growth of New York City long term?

10 HARIS KHAN: So it's hard to isolate, you know,
11 there's a variety of macroeconomic factors at play.
12 There's the tariffs, there's supply chain disruption,
13 there's inflation, there's the general affordability
14 crisis. You look at commercial rents in the city,
15 the level at which they're skyrocketing, it's really
16 been difficult for businesses to survive. For some
17 businesses, when you're really successful in your
18 business, that's actually— you face a penalty at the
19 end of your lease term because now the landlord may
20 increase the commercial rent for you because now they
21 realize you are making— you are actually pretty
successful.

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1 And so there's a whole variety of challenges, but
2 certainly when we anecdotally know that immigrant
3 businesses make up more than half of our— or
4 statistically we know immigrant businesses make up
5 more than half of our business community, uh, and we
6 know how vital it is to our economic health,
7 certainly when there's a sense of fear, personal
8 fear, um, we wonder how many entrepreneurs are
9 choosing to not be an entrepreneur at this time
10 because of all the factors they'd have to contend
11 with, uh, with this, uh, landscape.

11 Um, and also all the folks that are putting all
12 of their savings, uh, into risk by engaging in this
13 work and not having the demand that they could have
14 typically relied on. And so, um, definitely
15 anecdotally such kind of changes and the fear that
16 has been generated over the past year or so. Does
17 have an impact on our economic growth. And we're a
18 city of immigrants, and it's kind of part of our
19 fabric, and it's something that we're concerned
20 about. And we want to make sure wherever
21 opportunities exist where we can counter that— so we
saw clearly FIFA was a multi-billion dollar
opportunity where it's already going to be focused on

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1 48 countries. Why not ensure that countries, uh, and
2 immigrants of those countries, um, in New York City
3 that have vibrant commercial corridors and businesses
4 can take part in that opportunity and help. It's not
5 gonna- I'm, I'm certain it won't completely alleviate
6 a year and a half worth of pain for some of these
7 businesses, but it'll be something, um, and it'll be
8 something that is positive and can ensure that the
9 limited resources that are being dedicated to this
10 World Cup can also have a tag-on, a follow-through
effect on the economic health of those corridors.

11 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Gotcha. Thank you.
12 I'd like to mention that we've been joined by Council
13 Member Brooks-Powers, and at this time I will turn it
over to Council Member Encarnación.

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. So, uh, in
15 your, in your statement, you know, you mentioned that
16 more than half of New York City's 1,800- no, 180,000
17 are small businesses. And I mentioned that nearly
18 40% of the population was born outside of the U.S.,
making them immigrant communities.

19 Um, your staff is about 6 people, right? Your
20 staff is around 6 people. It's not enough. 5?
21

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LORENA LUCERO: What, what, which part of the
office? The MOIA external?

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yes, no, your MOIA
staff.

LORENA LUCERO: The MOIA office as a whole?
Correct. It's about 60 for the whole office. Hmm,
6-0 for the whole, um, office.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: But the budget provides
for 5 of your staffers, correct? The MOIA budget.

LORENA LUCERO: But as we— yes, Chair, but as we
mentioned during our preliminary budget hearing, the
office as a whole is about 60 people.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Right, but in— okay, so
it's not enough. It's the point that I was trying to
make here. Um, there's not enough to cover all the
small businesses. There's not enough to cover really
all of the collaboration that needs to be done in
order to protect the small businesses. Something
that I've heard in our— my office, uh, directly from
small businesses when, uh, a lot of these policies
were coming to— into fruition was that our small
businesses really didn't understand their rights, uh,
what was public space, what was considered public
space, what was considered, uh, staff space, how

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1 could they protect their staff as well as their
2 customers if there was to be, for example, the nice
3 rate.

4 So, um, so my question really starts with, one,
5 how is the collaboration happening between your
6 office and your office? Um, can you just detail that
7 a little bit?

8 LORENA LUCERO: Uh, thank you for the question,
9 Chair. I can start just at the top level, and then
10 I, I do want to address the- some of the outreach. I
11 think I think in regards to forward-facing materials.
12 So, um, really, you know, and what SBS pay is, is
13 always a goal for an agency to ensure that
14 immigration is not an afterthought, but it's truly
15 embedded in the work. And I think what our colleague
16 here expresses is really showcases that, um, the work
17 that we do with them is really threefold. We support
18 them with, uh, language access and provide technical
19 assistance as they're developing, um, material and,
20 you know, interpreting the law and the Local Law 30.
21 We also partner with them in outreach events. Um, we
have partnered with them just this calendar year in
4, 4 events, but it doesn't stop there. We also

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1 provide them with policy updates that might relate to
2 their work.

3 In addition to what was mentioned, some of the
4 outreach material that we've put together and sort of
5 to the comment that you made, um, we made changes to
6 our forward-facing material to ensure that there was
7 a Know Your Rights, a flyer that was provided in
8 regards to what individuals could do if ICE comes
into their workplace.

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yeah, and is, uh, SBS
10 on the interagency task force?

11 LORENA LUCERO: Yes, they are.

12 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay, um, and so, you
13 know, just yesterday we were in a meeting and one of
14 our colleagues, Council Member Zhuang, mentioned many
15 of her businesses, uh, small businesses, they're not
16 on the web, on the internet in terms of a website.
17 They just don't have that kind of access or that kind
18 of support. And so obviously this is a community
19 that, you know, it's operating in a different
20 language. Many immigrant communities, many immigrant
21 business owners, were trying to get connected into
what was going on with the FIFA World Cup, um, and
really wanted to understand how, um, how we can

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1 support. Because I think the point I was trying to
2 make with the amount of staff and the amount of
3 resources is that there's always gonna be room for
4 people to fall through the cracks, right? But in a
5 time when we're talking about serious consequences,
6 about deportation, about fear of being able to stay
7 in this country, like we have to tighten up those
8 resources to make sure that they don't.

9 So I just wanted to understand, like, in, in
10 those cases, where would any one of my colleagues
11 reach out to here to really, uh, close that loop?

12 HARIS KHAN: So I know, Chair, you're, you're, I
13 think you kind of referenced FIFA, right? Is that
14 kind of part of the—

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yeah. I mean, I think
16 it's an example of a larger issue. I mean, this is a
17 huge thing coming into New York, and we still have
18 small businesses that are unable to gain access to
19 that.

20 HARIS KHAN: So I think for us, you know, I did—
21 we do have a 6-person, 5 to 6, currently at 5-person
22 outreach team. Um, the— we also operate 7 business
23 solution centers, one in each borough. We also have
24 a hotline, 888-SBS-4NYC. And particularly to your

1 point on website accessibility and the digital
2 literacy gap, that website, the digital divide, that,
3 that website is supposed to serve as a more friendly,
4 warm handoff space to get connected to services
5 instead of logging onto the website and then, uh,
6 going through 10 different tabs to figure out what
7 you need. But you've got the hotline, you've got 7
8 business solution centers. We have, um, our
9 in-person team that is also going out to
neighborhoods.

10 Certainly more would help, but we have been
11 committed to maximizing every resource that we have
12 to deliver what we can. And, uh, proud that we just
13 started our FIFA outreach work as soon as, uh, the
14 materials were finalized by our partner agencies.
15 And within a week, you know, we're sharing 56,000 New
16 Yorkers have been able to reach and, um, have
17 reached, ah, have received these materials.

18 Certainly we're gonna spend the next month
19 doubling down on this 'cause we know that this is not
20 enough in a lot of neighborhoods. Um-

21 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay.

HARIS KHAN: We're not receiving enough
materials. So we got, we're gonna go out there. We

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1 would love your support as well in this critical time
2 where we only have, right, 60, less than 60 days. So
3 we're gonna do our best with the resources we have.
4 We know our partner agencies are gonna do their best.
5 Um, and any support we can get from community
6 partners, local electeds, we would absolutely love
7 that.

8 And then at our Small Business Month Expo, which
9 is our flagship largest ever small business gathering
10 for the year, which we'd love again, everybody too,
11 uh, please do share it in your newsletters and engage
12 with your constituents. We're gonna have not only
13 tabling by tourism and other partners that will
14 promote again some of these opportunities, to the
15 2,500+ people that show up in person.

16 We're also gonna have a panel discussion, uh,
17 during that day with Mia, who's our czar for World
18 Cup, with the president of the tourism- NYC Tourism,
19 with, uh, leadership from SBS to further share from
20 the top on all of the ways in which we want people to
21 engage there. We're getting to a point where there's
almost, I think it's 8 different ways in which small
businesses can engage and benefit from existing
efforts that could help them with marketing, that

1 could help them with some visibility. That's a lot
2 of things to keep track of and so we're, we're
3 intentionally trying to make sure it's in a toolkit
4 that people can access with QR code and links,
5 hyperlinks.

6 It's also in person when we're talking to people,
7 we're pointing them to the QR code. It's also at our
8 large-scale events in the expo, and it's also being
9 shared through our, uh, email marketing. And of the
10 56,000 folks that we reached, that includes every
11 single food service establishment that has an email
12 with the Department of Health. We get that list, and
13 we've made sure every single restaurant business,
14 food business that we have a contact for, has
15 received that information.

16 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. And, um, for
17 MOIA, what have you learned about the, um, those
18 working in the fields like hospitality and
19 construction about the efforts, uh, the effects of—
20 excuse me— of immigration policies on the workforce
21 and their business operations?

LORENA LUCERO: Uh, thank you for the question,
Chair. Um, if you would allow me to take a bit of a
step back, um, because just some data for you is that

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1 via our, um, Ask MOIA hotline and and, um, service
2 that we do within MOIA. Um, we've only received 10
3 calls connected to just, uh, a small business
4 specifically, but it's really been more about, um,
5 how to access, um, legal services more than like
6 directly on small businesses. But just to sort of
7 say that, um, at MOIA we support immigrants as a
8 whole. Uh, immigrant entrepreneurs are just one
9 piece of the puzzle in the larger spectrum. We
10 provide support to immigrant New Yorkers and just to
11 provide you with a bit of a stack to really sort of
12 answer your question. Undocumented immigrants have
13 the highest labor participation, as you noted, of any
14 group, yet they earn the lowest.

15 Undocumented immigrants earn an average of about
16 \$36,000 compared to naturalized noncitizens who make
17 about \$50,000. The biggest concern we've heard just
18 as a whole in regards to immigrants, um, is, uh,
19 remaining in status. Um, right now, as we've seen
20 and as, as has been noted, um, the federal
21 Administration and any hopes of affirmative relief
has really been halted. And the fear of even
submitting an application for citizenship, um, people

1 just don't want to because they're afraid of what
2 might happen if they show up to a ceremony.

3 So, um, the bulk of the work that we've provided
4 and the bulk of resources have been for our legal
5 services that make up about 90% of the funding that
6 we give out.

7 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: I, I agree. I've heard
8 a lot, a lot of, um, that feedback as well. And I
9 know that, um, while we're talking about what can be
10 done, I think the frustration that all of us feel is
11 that there's very-- we're very limited as a city, and
12 we're trying to understand how we can best support
13 both of your offices to make sure that that, you
14 know, individuals are being supported, whether that
15 be by language access, making sure that, you know,
16 um, flyers and QR codes. I think those are great,
17 but some of them just don't operate in that way. So
18 I'm glad that we're going out into the streets. I
19 also, I'm gonna encourage obviously that the expo be,
20 you know, bring it uptown, bring it to the Bronx,
21 bring it, bring it in other places. We'll find a
space for you, you know, just, I know, we, we, we
wanna make sure that it's accessible and that
everybody feels a part of it. And it's not somewhere

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1 Midtown where people may not, you know, may not be
2 familiar with and may not care to go to. So it's
3 just, you know, that accessibility and that real
4 compassion and care of saying like, we'll come to
5 you, I think really works well with small businesses,
6 especially because they have a lot on their plate as
7 it is.

8 So, uh, put that out there before I, I open it up
9 to the other Council Members, uh, so that they can
10 have some questions but thank you.

11 HARIS KHAN: As you've put it out there, um,
12 we'll say if there's an opportunity, if you identify
13 a location, a venue, an event that's already
14 happening or something you'd want to work with us on,
15 we'd be happy to bring our resources too. And we've,
16 we've done a series of events, uh, in the district
17 with the— your office and your predecessor, uh, when
18 you were running that office as Chief of Staff. And,
19 uh, and we're committed to that work. We want to be
20 in every neighborhood. We're going to be in Little
21 Senegal again for FIFA, and we've been in East Harlem
even last week doing some outreach to local bodegas
and delis, uh, as the city-owned grocery store
conversation picks up. And so we're committed to

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1 this work. We'll be anywhere and everywhere you
2 invite us to reach out to our teams and we'll figure
3 out the best way to staff.

4 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: I love that and let's
5 go both ways. If you're in my neighborhood, I should
6 know and go.

7 HARIS KHAN: Yes, yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Alright, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. I will now
10 turn it over to Council Member Morano for questions.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you both, Madam
12 Chairs, for convening this hearing and for your
13 leadership of each of these, uh, Committees. Thank
14 you for your testimony.

15 Um, just following up on what everyone else was
16 mentioning on the World Cup, I know that you said
17 that SBS is coordinating for the World Cup, and you
18 expect incredible foot traffic. What specific steps
19 are being taken to ensure outer borough businesses,
20 small businesses, including Staten Island businesses,
21 actually benefit economically instead of all the
activity being concentrated in Manhattan tourist
zones?

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2 HARIS KHAN: Thank you, uh, Council Member. I
3 think that really it's the leadership of our Mayor
4 and our— the first ever World Cup czar who ensured
5 that the 5 uh, fan events, the 5, 5 fine zones that
6 the city was gonna work with the host committee on,
7 uh, organizing, uh, are being organized in all
8 boroughs and that they're free, which is different
9 than what was intended initially.

10 Um, that itself I think signals this direction of
11 ensuring outer boroughs are represented and can, uh,
12 engage with the economic opportunity. Then there's
13 this series of opportunities that are being planned.
14 You could engage in any business in New York City,
15 including outer borough businesses could engage in
16 this, uh, 5-borough um, we'll get the exact name—
17 Five Borough Tournament, I think it's called— where
18 you could sign up for the \$26 special and you'll be
19 promoted as part of tourism's marketing material.

20 So when tourists go in, they wanna explore the
21 list of people who are participating in this Five
Borough Tournament, you could see yourself listed
there. Uh, there's a calendar of events that, uh,
tourism is also putting together where businesses can
be featured if they're doing FIFA-related engagement.

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1 Um, and so there's— and there's a toolkit that we've
2 developed with— that tourism has developed in
3 coordination with us that lists all of these
4 different types of engagements. Again, it's almost 8
5 different ways in which a business can participate in
6 some of these free marketing opportunities for
7 themselves. And so it's a lot, it's a bit
8 overwhelming now. That's how many, uh, ways there
9 are to engage. And so we are taking that to Port
10 Richmond, we're taking that to Little Haiti. Uh,
11 we'll— we've shared it across, um, the business
12 contacts that we have, and we're gonna commit over
13 the next month to doing that outreach, um, to ensure
14 that businesses can benefit from these opportunities.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: In your testimony, you
14 repeatedly mentioned outreach, resource fairs,
15 translated materials, and know your rights
16 information, which is— which is great. But w— what
17 measurable economic outcomes can you point to? H—
18 have business closures decreased? Has foot traffic
19 improved? Have revenues stabilized? And I don't
20 mean to sound cynical when I ask the question, but
21 are we mostly measuring success by the measure— by

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1 the number of flyers distributed and events held. Do
2 those translate into real-world economic impact?

3 HARIS KHAN: So there's, there's opportunities
4 for businesses to really, uh, plug into this World
5 Cup, right? And there's, and there's things that
6 they could do even today without any of these
7 opportunities that we've been mentioning today in
8 this hearing. Um, a business, if it's part of their
9 natural course to have games that are streamed, all
10 that can continue. vThey don't need licenses from
11 FIFA, they don't need a permit from SEPO, they don't
12 need any other additional step. If they are a
13 nightlife business in the North Shore and they
14 already play, uh, a game— games on their TVs, all of
15 that can continue.

16 They could easily just market it as like, this is
17 a FIFA game night and you can come in, um, and
18 there's some basic rules but incredibly easy to
19 follow. In most cases, they don't need to have any
20 additional changes to their practices. And so we
21 know naturally there's gonna be an economic gain from
just doing what they do. Uh, we as a city and at
SBS, what we're committed to is where the city is
intentionally creating opportunities for free

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1 marketing, let's spread those out across the city so
2 they could benefit.

3 The city's also working, uh, in City Hall, uh,
4 under their leadership, um, working towards a
5 culture, a cultural passport. That would also
6 feature different neighborhoods where you can engage
7 with the countries that are being featured in the
8 World Cup.

9 That again, whenever that information comes out,
10 we'll be promoting it. So as things come out from
11 our partner agencies, we're spreading the word. Um,
12 and, and to your point, there's natural economic
13 growth that will happen because people are gonna-
14 business owners are gonna be creative, and it's New
15 York City, they're always creative.

16 Um, but to the extent that we can help support
17 it, we will.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. But before
20 I turn it over to my colleague, because we keep
21 talking about FIFA, I just want to ask, because we're
a little over a month out, everything is coming,
everything is coming, everything is coming. How are
our businesses going to know when it's here, right?

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1 Like, is there a huge— at this point it would have to
2 be a huge television blitz to say, hey, now you can
3 look at the information for how you can benefit from
4 FIFA.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Huh, nobody has a
6 television. No one has—

7 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Something, uh, Council
8 Member Brewer, because I mean, if I go to the website
9 now and I'm a small business and I see nothing, the
10 likelihood that I'm gonna go back 2 weeks from now, a
11 month from now, is very unlikely. Like, we— everyone
12 knows FIFA is here.

13 HARIS KHAN: Right. So there is something.

14 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: As we haven't done— we
15 haven't done a good job of putting the information
16 out to let small businesses know how to participate
17 in a meaningful way.

18 HARIS KHAN: Yeah. So as soon as materials were
19 developed and finalized and, uh, an engagement
20 option, like sign up, here's how you sign up. Here's
21 the real call to action. As soon as we received
them, they were out in the streets. We've shared
them with our staff, we've shared them with the
business owners, we've shared them with every single,

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1 uh, business owner that we have on our food and
2 beverage and nightlife night lists. That includes
3 the download and the coordination with the health
4 department. So anybody that's a registered food
5 service establishment from permittee. If they've
6 shared their email address, we've gotten that. And
7 we know that it is the food beverage businesses that
8 are the most relevant here, uh, with this
9 conversation, right? There are other business types,
10 like there's gonna be— I've heard there's gonna be a
11 nail salon challenge where we're gonna have nail
12 salon technicians compete for the most creative,
13 interesting ways, uh, to promote culture and life and
14 countries of origin. But we know that economically,
15 where a lot of foot traffic is gonna come, there's
16 gonna be restaurants, it's gonna be bars, it's gonna
17 be nightlife. And so those are the businesses that
18 we focused on the minute, uh, these, uh, plans are
19 finalized, materials are ready, we're sharing them,
20 and we've been coordinating ahead of time with those
21 agencies so they know they have to— that we want to
work on this.

We're committed to this work. We're here, um,
and that's what we'll be doing for the next—

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CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: A recommendation, um, because I know you said of the 56,000 people reached, it's all the food businesses that are, um, registered with the Department of Health.

HARIS KHAN: Sorry, it's not all- I'm saying, um, all the DOHMH registered food establishment permittees, we- that is, that's included. That's a subset of the 56,000. It's a much broader 56,000. Just a recommendation would be to share that list with New York City Tourism because currently if you go to their website and you look under the different countries of recommendations of restaurants, they may have 4 for each country. So just maybe being proactive because at this point in time it's unrealistic for those, even a quarter of those businesses, to know where to send their information, where to be known.

If we already have the data. Let's proactively put it out there to all these people coming to New York to say visit all of these small businesses. So that's what, what we're sharing with those businesses is how can you be featured on tourism. So you could be featured on tourism's calendar.

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CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: That's what I'm saying. Don't tell them how to get featured. We should proactively feature all of our small businesses in the city of New York because we have access to their information. I digress. Council Member Hanks.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you Chairs, and thank you so much, um, Commissioner, uh, so in 2022, the Council passed and then Mayor Adams signed Speaker Menin's One-Stop Shop Bill, which requires SBS to, okay, create a one-stop shop NYC business portal which all the applications, permits, licenses, um, related information to open and operate.

Uh, the law, Local Law 94, requires that information be presented in citywide designated languages. What information on the portal is available in the citywide designated languages?

HARIS KHAN: Thank you, Council Member Hanks, Majority Whip Hanks. Uh, the portal is available—our understanding is it's available in 11 languages, and it's OTI that handles technology contracts in the city.

We advised on the business content for the website. Um, how is SBS working to ensure the

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1 quality of the translations? So we— when— as soon as
2 the website was launched, in our role of providing
3 advice to our partner agencies, we, um, we worked
4 with OTI to further, uh, er, contract with another
5 vendor to to really focus in on the language
6 translation because the— we at SBS felt as though
7 some of the translated material that it was
8 generating naturally was not optimal. And so we
9 worked with, uh, with a partner which included human
10 review of the content across the 11 languages and
11 tried to improve it so it's more user-friendly and
12 understandable to immigrant New Yorkers. And so it
13 was a mix of machine and human translations in all of
14 our pages in the resources by industry section and
15 the business services section, in the emergency
16 preparedness section went through human review
17 alongside, uh, translated vendor experts.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Okay, that's great to
19 hear. Um, now I'm gonna go a little bit locally. So
20 for a business owner, and I heard that you, um, you
21 mentioned Port Richmond, uh, but many, um, business
owners in Port Richmond don't even speak English or
Spanish. They speak the indigenous language. Um,
what about small businesses, uh, and small business

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1 owners who are not proficient in one or more of the
2 languages that is designated by the city? How do we,
3 um, what kind of recourse does SBS provide? Yeah, so
4 I think that's where the city- citywide there's the
5 language line resource where if an agency's external
6 affairs or public-facing teams don't speak a
7 language, there's still, uh, a tool, the language
8 line tool that you could use and our staff are
9 trained on using it so that if there's a
10 communication barrier, they're able to call language
line and get translation, interpretation.

11 LORENA LUCERO: And I'll just add, uh, Council
12 Member, that, um, with, with SBS, we also partner
13 with them at MOIA to provide any additional support
14 that they might need if there's an issue that's
15 flagged, particularly with the language of limited
diffusion, as you mentioned right now.

16 Um, we step in to support as needed if language
online is not accessible.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much. May I
18 ask one more question, Chair?

19 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Absolutely.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. So Staten
21 Island is geographically isolated from the rest of

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1 New York City. Uh, the closest SBS Solution Center
2 to Port Richmond is not on the island. If language
3 access counseling requires a ferry ride and a subway
4 trip, it may not be practically, um, accessible.

5 So is any of this counseling available in person—
6 in person locations in Staten Island? Um, is SBS
7 offices in other boroughs? And because we feel that
8 we have— there's a travel burden. Um, so what is the
9 travel burden for North Shore business owners seeking
language counseling?

10 HARIS KHAN: North Shore business owners can go
11 to our Business Solutions Center in North Shore,
12 right by the ferry station, very close to your
13 district office, uh, and I, I know our teams have
14 worked very closely, and whenever we've had workforce
15 events at the center, we've, we've cross-promoted it.
16 Your office has been incredibly generous in sharing
17 it with your constituents. And— and similar to the
18 Workforce Center, our business center is there too.
19 It's in privately owned leased space, um, but we are
20 committed to ensuring that presence in the north of
21 Staten Island, uh, particularly right by the tip,
because we know it's an incredibly public
transit-friendly space.

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1 Uh, and if Council Member Morano is here, I
2 wouldn't say that to you since he's not here. I'll
3 say that it's, it's a, it's the best location for the
4 borough-

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Yes, it is. I mean, part
6 of the questions that I ask is so my constituents can
7 hear, and then we're- that's just more about
8 education and accessibility, uh, spreading that kind
9 of information. But we are really proud that Staten
10 Island is becoming so beautifully more diverse than
11 it's ever been.

12 So thank you for all your help, and thank you,
13 chairs.

14 HARIS KHAN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. I'll now
16 turn it over to Councilman- Council Member Salaam.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you Chairs.
18 Definitely appreciate the testimony that has been,
19 uh, given as well. Just a few questions.

20 As of March 2026, lawful permanent residents are
21 barred from SBA-guaranteed loans. Given that
immigrants are more than twice as likely as
native-born residents to start businesses and
comprise nearly half of New York City's small

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1 business community, what alternative finance
2 mechanisms is SBA deploying to fill this gap, and
3 what is the projected shortfall in capital access for
4 affected business owners.

5 HARIS KHAN: Thank you, Council Member Salaam.
6 It's, uh, it's significant gap in financing that's
7 been created as a result of the federal SBA's rule
8 change that excludes all but U.S. citizens and U.S.
9 nationals from accessing federally backed loans. Um,
10 and so it's— we can get back to you on a— like, we've
11 done some preliminary analysis and it's in the tens
12 of millions of dollars, it's in the billions of
13 dollars nationally. And it's in the tens of millions
14 of dollars for New York City.

15 Um, and it is concerning, but understanding that
16 we're all in a tough budgetary environment, we are
17 committed to helping small business owners of
18 immigrant descent when they do reach out to us. And
19 if they are permanent residents or others that are
20 not currently eligible for the federal loans, we're
21 trying to scan the universe of lending options
available to them through our Funds Finder, which is
a website, the first ever capital marketplace for
small businesses in New York.

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1 Um, it's called the NYC Funds Finder tool. Uh,
2 and we also— to our business solution centers, we
3 have 7 business solution centers, one in your
4 district on 125th. Um, to the physical center,
5 through the Funds Finder tool, or through the
6 hotline, if somebody calls us, we'll connect them to
7 our financing assistance team. They'll scan what's
8 available. Although there's a gap, there's still
9 some— to some lending options that may make sense for
10 that business, and then help package their
11 application so they can succeed in securing that
12 lending product.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you. And, um, the
12 Trump Administration finalized an agreement allowing
13 ICE to access IRS tax data of undocumented
14 immigrants. If fear of under— I mean, sorry, if
15 fear, if fear of deportation drives undocumented
16 immigrants who paid \$3.1 billion in New York State
17 and local taxes in 2022 to stop filing. What is the
18 projected fiscal impact on New York City's tax base,
19 and what steps is the Administration taking to
20 reassure immigrant workers that tax compliance will
21 not be weaponized against them?

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1
2 LORENA LUCERO: I can start. Um, um, what we
3 know and understand is that the impact will be high.
4 I don't have the exact number, but I'll have it
5 before this hearing is over, I think. Um, what has
6 been done is work with DCWP and providing information
7 to small- to, to just individuals. Um, and also, uh,
8 we have been leveraging our MOIA Legal Support
9 Hotline to also provide assessment if people reach
10 out, um, to inquire about whether they want to move
11 forward or not. It's a very sort of personal
12 decision as well for individuals. Um, but I can try
13 to get back to you on the number of what we project
14 the impact to be.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: And if I may, just one
16 last- last question.

17 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Um, undocumented
18 workers represent roughly 12% of New York City's
19 hospitality labor force and are critical to
20 healthcare, construction, and agriculture. With
21 enforcement fear driving workers to stay home and
reduce courthouse appearances, what sector-specific
workforce stabilization strategies are SBS and
relevant agencies pursuing to prevent cascading labor
shortages in these industries?

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1 HARIS KHAN: Thank you, uh, Council Member
2 Salaam. So our workforce system is primarily
3 federally funded, and what that means is you have to
4 be work authorized in order to get the most deepest
5 levels of workforce services. But any New Yorker can
6 approach our centers for some, uh, some limited level
7 of services, such as just resume help, um, and access
8 to our computer lab. But it's, uh, the deepest
9 levels of workforce interventions, the kind of
10 strategies you're referencing, our system is
11 federally funded, so that creates challenges in that
12 regard.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you, Chairs.

12 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. I now turn
13 it over to Council Member Brewer.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. A
15 couple questions. When you are— does the city have
16 for the small business— this was during the police,
17 uh, issues— panic buttons? Did that ever pass for
18 small businesses, particularly the bodegas? And if
19 so, how is it used?

19 HARIS KHAN: So the— my understanding is, Council
20 Member Brewer, you're referencing a city Council
21 proposed legislation. My recollection is it did not

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1 pass the Council, but last year, uh, then former
2 First Deputy Mayor Mastro worked with EDC, uh, to
3 provide panic buttons to, uh, bodegas that are part
4 of the United Bodega— Bodegas of America.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yep. Um, and, uh, my
6 understanding is over 300 bodegas, uh, received the
7 panic buttons through that program.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And would that be—
9 would they be trained to use it if necessary for ICE
10 issues, or that's a different topic?

11 HARIS KHAN: So these are— this is a program that
12 EDC is administering. Uh, my understanding is it
13 triggers, uh, law enforcement response, uh, to the
14 premises. So if you're a business owner, you're a
15 bodega worker, something tragic is happening, uh,
16 somebody is threatening your staff, you press the
17 button and NYPD is then sending, deploying
18 themselves.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But I'm just saying it
20 could also be used for ICE also.

21 HARIS KHAN: Uh, yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

HARIS KHAN: Well, I, I would defer to the ADC.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It seems like a tool that if instructed correctly, it could be helpful. I don't know, but I wanted to be in the mix.

HARIS KHAN: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Number 2, um, websites. I don't-- a lot of the small businesses do not have a website in the City of New York. I know that from past experience. Are you working-- this be both an ICE question, a police question, a business question. Do you know how many don't? Is that something that you're working on? Would it help in communication?

To me, when I go now to small businesses, uh, not just because of ICE, all the issues they're dealing with, they want more communication. They don't all have bids. We don't need a bid on every-- they don't have chambers.

HARIS KHAN: Hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They need communication.

HARIS KHAN: Mhm.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And so I'm just wondering, um, how many have websites? How many have communicate-- what, what are you doing about that topic? Because websites do help communication-wise?

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LORENA LUCERO: I, I'll start with some of the
affirmative outreach that we've done jointly with SBS
to the point not everybody has a TV, but some folks
do have radio and read the newspaper.

So in the past we have partnered with SBS to, um,
hold at least 2 roundtables with ethnic media
reporters. One that happened the latest, uh, was in
September of 2025, and I know we're working on
putting some others out in which SBS and MOIA joined,
um the core topic was immigrant small business owners
and their rights regardless of immigration statuses.
We provided resources connected to, um, KYR again,
and as well as, uh, information regarding services
and, um, initiatives that might be available to them.
We also did that in 2024.

The goal there was really— it has always been
when MOIA leads the ethnic media roundtables is to
have ethnic media reporters in the room so they could
share, um, information out in multiple languages.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Anything else for
SBS in terms of websites or communication?

HARIS KHAN: So, we provide a 6-module series on
digital marketing, it includes email marketing, uh,
and other guidance. Um, and then I did wanna

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1 highlight, and I think it's kinda tied to several
2 questions, um, because we know that most folks— there
3 are folks that don't have access to a website or are
4 not comfortable navigating a website. There's a
5 digital divide that is in the city, exists in the
6 city. We have our SPS hotline, and of that hotline,
7 I wanted to share, um, in FY— FY25, we received 9,780
8 calls. And of those calls, the languages other than
9 English that appeared to be the top languages were
Spanish, Mandarin, Russian.

10 Um, and then in this year, FY26, to date, we're
11 already at 8,900— uh, 8,093 calls. So definitely on
12 track to surpass the number from the previous fiscal
year. And again, like, it's Arabic, Bangla, Russian.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: What are they calling
14 about though, generally? Is it how to get their
15 lease, or is it, you know, something else?

16 HARIS KHAN: So this is the entry. So if you
17 can't access our website, here's another entryway.
18 Just call us and tell us, I am a business owner, I
19 want to— I have a store, um, I want to open up
20 another store. I— before I sign the lease, do you
21 guys have free legal— I heard you have free legal
support. And we'll say, yes, we do. Thank you for

1 calling us. We can provide up to 40 hours of pro
2 bono legal assistance going through the lease
3 document, reviewing the lease document, negotiating
4 with the landlord's attorney.

5 And so the entryway to our services is the
6 hotline. It's also our website. It's also when you
7 speak to one of us, uh, on staff, uh, in, on the
8 field, in the community. And so we're just trying to
9 make sure there's multiple modes of access so we're
not locking any New Yorkers out.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And if one of the
11 services that can be offered is how to get a website,
12 how to do a website. Does SBS offer that service to
people?

13 HARIS KHAN: So we have webinars on best
14 practices of email marketing, website, social media.
15 And whenever those webinars come, if you call us and
16 you say, I want a website, we'll look to see what's
17 the most relevant type of educational course we have
available at the time and connect you to that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because I think many of
19 them don't have, so I don't know if that's working.
Thank you.

20 HARIS KHAN: Yeah.
21

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CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you, Council
Member, Council Member Hanks. You had a follow-up.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you, Chair. Um,
this question surrounds, um, employment documentation
and compliance support. Has SBS given any thought to
how they're going to address the fact that the IRS
has finalized an agreement with ICE to share tax
information on undocumented, undocumented, um,
immigrants? I think it was like April 2025.

LORENA LUCERO: Maybe I can start just to answer
Council Member Salaam's question about the data.
It's reported that, um, approximately \$14.4 billion,
um, in the total— so for Social Security and Medicare
taxes of \$6.5 billion could be lost nationwide
according to the American Immigration Council
because, um, undocumented immigrants or immigrants as
a whole may not be submitting their tax returns via
the ITIN.

So I just wanted to share that with you.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. So, um, so if
an immigrant worker stops filing their taxes out of
fear, has SBS updated its guidance to business owners
about I-9 compliance in light of increased ICE
worksite enforcement? And where can a business owner

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1 get in-person assistance in filling out employment
2 forms? And is this assistant— assistance available
3 in multiple languages?

4 HARIS KHAN: Thank you, Council Member. So on,
5 on tax-related submissions, the city government has
6 DCWP offering free tax prep for, uh, New Yorkers, but
7 also for small business owners under certain
8 eligibility thresholds. It's our practice to refer
9 them to experts in the tax field, and that's DCWP.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much. Thank
11 you, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. Um,
13 Council Member Brooks-Powers had to leave, but she
14 did have a couple of questions. Um, as immigration
15 enforcement increases fear in communities, are SBS
16 and MOIA seeing a shift of workers and small
17 businesses into more informal informal or
18 off-the-books economic activity?

19 HARIS KHAN: So I can start and pass it to my
20 colleague at MOIA. We've generally seen, uh,
21 incredible, um, anxiety and fear in any level of
participation in the economy, and that includes front
of the house, that includes ownership, that includes
working, um, and that it also includes the informal

1 economy. There are street vendors that are no longer
2 vending due to fear, um, personal fear. And so
3 there's a whole variety of, um, concerns that they
4 have. I don't— our understanding, and anecdotally
5 what I've heard from our community leaders and
6 business owners, is not necessarily, uh, a
7 segmentation by formal and informal, but more fear
8 just persists in this trying time.

9 LORENA LUCERO: Yeah, I would, I, I would agree
10 with that. I think, uh, anecdotally we've— it's the
11 same, same of to what was shared by SPS. And I'll
12 just say that immigrants, as we know, persevere and,
13 um, will find a way to make ends meet, um, but in
14 regards to the specific data, we don't have that as
15 of, uh, as of now.

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. Um, what risks
17 do you see this poses for worker exploitation, wage
18 theft, and long-term economic mobility, and how is
19 the city responding?

20 LORENA LUCERO: Yeah, I can start. I mean, I
21 think what we, um, laid out at the very beginning is
that with economic mobility and what we know is that
gaining legal, um, status is always key to ensure
economic mobility. That stat that I shared

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1 previously, undocumented immigrants earn less than
2 \$15,000 from a comparison to somebody who has some
3 sort of status.

4 So a big, um, push that we have made at MOIA has
5 been providing legal services to folks so they can
6 enter, um, enter the space. Again, um, as the Chair-
7 Chair in Encarnación mentioned, um, it is a difficult
8 time given how aggressive the federal government has
9 been and is, that even affirmative relief as simple
10 as citizenship causes fear of folks just even
11 entering and/or going and/or pursuing that, um, that
12 pathway.

13 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Can you speak to
14 whether the economic impacts of federal immigration
15 policy changes are disproportionately affecting
16 specific neighborhoods or commercial corridors with
17 high concentrations of immigrant-owned businesses?

18 HARIS KHAN: Uh, thank, thank you, Chair. So I,
19 on actual vacancy rates and macro data, we're not
20 necessarily seeing any significant shifts of
21 increased, um, instability in storefronts, and, and
it's generally stable if not trending downwards. But
we don't think just because the data is saying
storefronts are relatively stable, that means there

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1 aren't, uh, there isn't significant change happening
2 in the economy. Clearly, business owners, community
3 leaders are all citing— and when we experience our
4 city, we know our city. So when you walk down, uh,
5 parts of Diversity Plaza at some points in time, it
6 does feel different. And that, that spreads across
7 commercial corridors.

8 So even though businesses might not be, uh—

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Right on queue with Diversity
10 plaza on Jackson Heights, Jackson Heights.

11 HARIS KHAN: Kebab King, always, uh, even though
12 the business owners themselves might still— maybe the
13 businesses themselves are still operational, I don't
14 think that, uh, that in any way suggests that the
15 impact is not real and that people are not actually
16 perceiving a sense of, uh, impact to their bottom
17 line.

18 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Well, let's say, um,
19 reports have shown that Washington Heights, Sunset
20 Park, and even my district in Corona have seen a huge
21 uptick in ICE raids. So how has your office kind of
seen in those particular areas— the decrease in foot
traffic in those corridors, um, businesses that—

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1 maybe more businesses that are reaching out to you
2 from those specific areas?

3 HARIS KHAN: So we, we've— we have— we don't
4 track— we don't have, uh, any tools to track foot
5 traffic itself. Uh, we know some business
6 improvement districts have some proprietary software
7 to do that. Uh, but what we do track citywide is
8 storefront occupancy rates, and that rate has not
significantly shifted.

9 In fact, it's actually decreasing. The vacancies
10 are decreasing, which means occupancies are
11 relatively healthy. But again, just because the
12 occupancy rates are healthy doesn't really mean, uh,
13 we're in a, in a great place economically for our
immigrant communities.

14 LORENA LUCERO: Chair, if you would allow me,
15 because I think I missed part of your— I didn't
16 answer part of your question a couple of questions
17 ago, but just to also say in regards to the point
18 that you made, um, connected to impacts that they
19 might be having to the workforce in connection to
20 harassment and things like that. We did partner with
21 CCHR and created a flyer, um, in April 2026,
immigrants in New York City, human rights work and at

1 home, given some of the issues that you laid out
2 regarding just abusive behaviors and things to that
3 extent. Um, so we've been, uh, sharing that widely.
4 And then to add affirmatively, um, some outreach in
5 your district in Corona Queens between January and
6 February where we were hearing some heights of
7 concerns that were coming out. MOIA's outreach team,
8 um, led, um, 8 events, um, in collaboration with
9 local community-based, um, organizations.

10 So at MOIA, it's not only that we're deployed
11 just because, you know, we're deciding where to go,
12 it's also through partnerships with local Council
13 Members as well as local, uh, community-based
14 organizations. So just wanted to share that with you
15 as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. Um, and
17 then a final question from Council Member
18 Brooks-Powers: How is the city targeting resources to
19 prevent long-term disinvestment in, um, these areas,
20 and are— what are projected long-term economic
21 impacts of federal immigration policy changes on
Southeast Queens specifically?

HARIS KHAN: So we, again, we haven't seen any,
uh, data to suggest there's persistent and prolonged,

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1 um, levels of economic impact that are statistically
2 showing up in any of our analyses, but happy to after
3 this hearing, we'll, we'll take a look into Southeast
4 Queens, the occupancy rates there, the Council
5 District, the Community Board, and see if, if we're--
6 if there is anything of that regard, we'll, we'll
7 share it with Council Member Brooks-Powers.

8 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: How are you guys going
9 about tracking this type of data? Because you're
10 saying we haven't seen any data yet, like what tool--
11 like what are your tools in your toolbox to actually
12 track this specifically and how it's affecting our
13 businesses?

14 HARIS KHAN: We, we have, so on, on city
15 storefront occupancy, we have a citywide, uh,
16 resource to be able to see on a quarterly basis.
17 There's a street canvassing that happens to track, is
18 this business open this quarter? Is it closed this
19 quarter? And at the end of the quarter, we have an
20 updated number for all of New York City. Um, that
21 informs us of occupancy rates.

22 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: So we are tracing it
23 solely based on occupancy, not actual sales. Right?
24 So if these businesses are suffering, quote unquote,

1 in silence, we are unaware that they're in dire need
2 just because their doors are technically still open.

3 HARIS KHAN: Yes, that's exactly the point I was
4 making, where just because this— the data shows
5 occupancy rates are trending downwards, we shouldn't
6 assume that that means there is great economic
7 health, uh, that there are corridors in the city that
8 we're hearing from the business owners that they're
9 perceiving a significant decrease in foot traffic.
10 And so we shouldn't read into the citywide data on
11 occupancy to suggest everything is great, let's keep
12 moving.

13 Clearly something has shifted in the city, and
14 we've got to be more targeted and, uh, be mindful to
15 those changes. Um, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: What are we looking
17 at? How are we going to be more targeted and
18 actually capture the data?

19 HARIS KHAN: So on the data, I would argue,
20 Chair, that small businesses would not want to share
21 their sales data with government and with us. They
would very, they would very much be uncomfortable
with that level of data sharing, but the fact that
they share these experiences with us when they feel

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1 pain in their communities and they want us to be out
2 there and help guide them and, uh, share the, the
3 Know Your Rights materials that, uh, MOIA has helped
4 develop and ensure that they're able to protect their
5 workers. I think at some point it comes down to not
6 just the bottom line of the business, but the people
7 that the business employs and how much they love the
8 people that they serve in the community and also the
9 people they take care of as their workforce. And so
10 it's that level of support that we are on the ground
11 connecting New Yorkers to the Know Your Rights
12 materials. And again, whenever opportunities will
13 arise where it's free marketing for them, it's free
14 something else for them, we will be out there to
15 share that. And that's what we're doing with the
16 FIFA World Cup.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay, I'd like to
16 acknowledge that, um, we've been joined by Council
17 Member Krishnan, who has some questions. You don't
18 have a question? Okay, okay, my apologies. I stand
19 corrected. I have a couple more. And we have been
20 joined by Council Member Alvilés. Um, as we talk
21 about street vendors, uh, one visible example of
ICE's activity in New York City was seen on Canal

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1 Street, where a raid took place and multiple vendors
2 were taken into custody. Did SBS or MOIA perform any
3 outreach to the vendors who were taken or to any
4 other vendors in that area?

5 LORENA LUCERO: Yeah, um, we did, uh, work and
6 connect with the Street Vendor Project at the time,
7 um, and there was some canvassing that was done, um,
8 uh, post, uh, post-raid. We also connected with some
9 of the local organizers, um, who gained the trust of
individuals.

10 Um, so there was that and, uh, partly outreach
11 that was done by our office.

12 HARIS KHAN: And we were in close touch with, uh,
13 Amadou, the community leader who was in touch with
14 the vendors that were impacted. And we've, we've
15 always coordinated with Amadou and we continue to
16 coordinate with Amadou.

17 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. With SBS's new
18 Office of Street Vendor Services, how will outreach
19 be conducted and what information will be shared with
20 vendors moving forward?

21 HARIS KHAN: So we're really excited, uh, about--
well, first, thank you to the City Council on
overriding the veto that took place in December to

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1 ensure that we were in a position to launch this
2 Office of Street Vendor Services. It was a priority
3 for our agency to ensure we deepen work here, uh,
4 with this field.

5 Um, and, um, and the legislation required a start
6 date, uh, in August. We have decided to start this
7 office much earlier, months, uh, before its
8 legislative requirement, and we were proud to share,
9 and right before our preliminary hearing, um, that
10 Karina Kaufman Gutierrez, uh, as Street Vendor
11 Project's co-director, uh, is the city's first
12 executive director for this Office of Street Vendor
13 Services. She started on Monday. We've been meeting
14 daily, me and her, uh, and, uh, we're excited to
15 build that team out and the work that we'll be able
16 to do, uh, in this field.

17 Um, and, uh, certainly we'll leverage our
18 existing resources. Um, but it is, uh, an area that
19 we wanna make sure that vendors are able to get
20 targeted and curated services, not just the general
21 scope of business services that we provide at SBS.
And that includes Know Your Rights. So one of our
SVP has a contract through SBS, uh, for Chamber On
the Go, and they have their own version of a Know

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1 Your Rights material and collateral that's more
2 tailored to street vendors. It's more culturally
3 responsive to them with more specific guidance on how
4 to engage. And so that's the level of partnership
5 we'll continue to learn from and deepen with the
6 Karina on board.

7 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: How does the Office of
8 Street Vending work with MOIA?

9 LORENA LUCERO: Well, I think it's day 3.

10 HARIS KHAN: It's day 3.

11 LORENA LUCERO: But, um, we are— we have worked,
12 um, with Karina in the past and just the street
13 vendor project in the past, so we're looking forward
14 to the collaboration. I think we have a meeting in
15 the book soon, um, but we are um, looking forward to
16 supporting her new role.

17 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay, I'll turn it
18 over to Council Member Encarnación.

19 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Um, I want to shift
20 gears a little bit to talk about the, um, back in
21 2019, SBS at a Council hearing, uh, launched an
initiative called the Immigrant Bus— Business
Initiative.

HARIS KHAN: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Um, and so I wanted to know, in your words, like, what was the purpose of the initiative? And I know that, um, it was a 3-year pilot program. Wanted to understand— it's, it's since ended. Um, so wanted to understand if you were looking to revive it.

HARIS KHAN: Yeah, thank you. Thank you, uh, Chair Encarnación. So, the Immigrant Business Initiative is a de Blasio era, 20— 2015 to 2017, a 3-year pilot that was privately funded. It was funded through the City, uh, Community Development Fund. Um, and it was designed to help, uh, what it really accomplished was a guide that packaged and consolidated some existing resources into more, um, user-friendly, uh, framing for, uh, immigrant entrepreneurs. And it was accompanied by grants to 6 community-based organizations to further share that guide and those resources, the existing resources with local immigrant communities. This is at a time when we did not have a citywide, uh, agency outreach team. This is at a time when we did not even have our hotline that we've reported out has connected over 9,000 New Yorkers to phone calls, uh, including multilingual phone calls over the past fiscal year.

1 So, and in 2015, this was a point-in-time effort to
2 reach immigrant New Yorkers.

3 In 2026, and certainly under this new era, this,
4 the focus on immigrant New Yorkers and immigrant
5 entrepreneurs is baked into almost all of our work.
6 It's not a siloed program that we're launching. It's
7 something that we do on a daily basis for all of our
8 programs. And, uh, we ensure that- that focus
9 remains.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: But that guide, um, do
11 you see a future where SBS updates it? Is there a
12 commitment to update it, a commitment to keep the
13 guide? And I understand that it's not present in all
14 the work that you do, but having someone- I got- I
15 mean, obviously there's, there's a reason to
16 understand how you launch, develop, grow a small
17 business from that, uh, from an immigrant standpoint.
18 So wondering if there was any ideas of how to update
19 it and share it?

20 HARIS KHAN: So, from time to time, we've
21 reviewed it to understand whether it makes sense to
update it. And, um, I think it comes back to the
fact that it's really dense. We serve- we provide
over- at least over 40 business services. So,

1 putting it in a guide too is not really the most
2 accessible. It's really creating another layer that
3 people have to go through versus ensuring that when a
4 New Yorker raises concerns with their business, we
5 have the suite of services available to respond.

6 And, and not just waiting for them to raise that
7 concern, to be out there proactively in the
8 community, uh, with local community leaders, with
9 business leaders. And so the current intention is to
10 ensure we bake a focus on immigrant New Yorkers
11 throughout our work, and we don't create guides and,
12 and one-off websites that live on pages and then
13 direct people to the page instead of the actual
14 service and creating multiple layers before a person—

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: No, I understand. I
16 just think that, you know, the tendency is always to
17 say you can find it on our website, but it doesn't
18 necessarily work that way, right, for, for everyone.
19 And so a guide, a paper guide, sometimes while we run
20 the risk of things maybe not being updated as
21 quickly, we are getting information that at least is
some sort of pointing them to a direction, as opposed
to saying a website where they may not go to, and it
may not even be in their language.

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2 HARIS KHAN: Um, but we don't just do the
3 website. That's what I think what we're trying to
4 get at is the website is a very small part of our
5 outreach strategy. It's the hotline, it's our
6 in-person staff, it's the speaking in the language
7 that the community members are speaking. Um, it's
8 all of that. And if we did—

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: How are you getting
10 that to those people?

11 HARIS KHAN: Through outreach. If we did have
12 resources to, again, like, this was a 3-year
13 privately funded, uh, resource. If we had funding
14 to, uh, to do, to fund CBOs to do outreach, we would
15 love to do that as well. But, uh, at the current
16 moment in time, we've, we're now in a place where we
17 have a whole citywide team that does this outreach.
18 At that point in time, there was no citywide outreach
19 team at SBS.

20 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: The 6-person citywide
21 team?

HARIS KHAN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay, because if it's a
citywide outreach team, you want to think of it as
this big force. I mean, it is still 6 people. And

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1 so I just know that, you know, it is— and what, what
2 my goal here, right, is to find out how we as a
3 Council support the growth of these, um,
4 organizations, these offices, these departments,
5 understanding where that funding is needed and how
6 impacts, um, our small businesses. Because what
7 we're seeing on the ground, it's all of these
8 question marks about how do they get— and they come
9 to us, right?

10 Because we're the local elected officials and
11 we're in their communities. And so of course it is
12 our job to help them, um, but also to help you,
13 right? And to make sure that you're getting
14 everything that you need in order to make this
15 successful.

16 So, that's where we're at. So I wanted to know
17 to the, to the metrics, um, because I think that
18 that's you know, the, I, I'm surprised to hear that
19 the vacancies are actually, uh, going down um, in my
20 community, that is not the case in many communities,
21 vacant storefronts, um, you think they—

HARIS KHAN: So, I'm sorry if I, uh, misspoke and
I suggested in your community it's decreasing.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: No, no—

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HARIS KHAN: We'll follow up with your district.
Generally, citywide, it's stable and decreasing.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay, well, they are
decreasing. I could tell you, you don't have to
follow up with me. I can tell you it is decreasing
in my community. And, um, and to the point of the
metrics is it's really you know, I would love to work
with your office to see how we can find like an
innovative way to track how businesses are doing and
what exactly is impacting them. Cause it's difficult
for us, as you said in the beginning, to pinpoint
that immigration is, is the, the problem, right? Or
if it's, uh, inspections, if it's violations, if it's
new legislation that we passed in 2009, um, hmm, you
know, we, we don't know what it is that's impacting
our businesses.

So we, we really should work maybe more
collaboratively to find ways to really, um, make a
system for metrics that can really point to what the
issues are in, uh, specifically with our small
businesses. But I'll, I'll leave it there. I know
that— I think that Council Member Avilés may— mhm,
yep, you may have some questions.

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1 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you Chairs. Um,
2 er, good to see the Administration. Um, I
3 apologize, I missed earlier, so I may be asking
4 duplicate questions. Um, as, as you all know, uh,
5 street vendors are really important, and, and I know
6 you noted, uh, that, uh, Karina just started this
7 Monday, but I was curious to know what the current
8 budget for the Office of Street Vendors is
9 specifically, and, um, what does a fully staffed
office actually look like.

10 HARIS KHAN: Thank, thank you, Council Member
11 Avilés. Um, and we're happy to answer any questions,
12 even if they're repeat questions. We will do all of
the questions that you propose and present to us.

13 On the budget for the office, we currently, uh,
14 don't have a budget for the office itself, uh, but we
15 do have, um, we did hire Karina, uh, expecting that
16 through this budget process, since the legislative
17 requirement goes into effect in August of the next
18 fiscal year. We anticipated that, uh, this would be
19 part of the budget process. We're engaging in
20 continued conversations with senior leadership in
21 City Hall and OMB. Um, and to get us started, it

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will be 4 months before the legislative requirement,
we hired Karina, uh, as our Executive Director.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Do you anticipate, um,
obviously a year is away, there's a lot happening,
and I know there's a lot of planning. Do you
anticipate, um, providing additional lines from other
agencies to support that work in the meantime?

HARIS KHAN: So we, you know, the benefit of
having, uh, the Office of Street Vendor Services at
SBS is, uh, the team is now being able to leverage
all of the resources, teams, um, and capacity that
the agency already has. So we have, uh, the hotline
that exists, the 888-SBS 4NYC that any New Yorker can
call to get connected with our services.

We have our, the webpage. We also have our
6-person outreach, uh, team, and we have our 7
business solution centers that are located in all 5
boroughs. They're the in-person locations where you
can get access to our services. We've got all this
capacity and infrastructure built up. The benefit of
having the Office of Street Vendor Services, which
Council and Public Advocate Williams so thoughtfully,
uh, embedded into the proposed legislation, is that
it benefits from this entire ecosystem. Um, but we

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1 are in the middle of the budget process, and I know
2 that, uh, all agencies are discussing the upcoming
3 needs that they may have with the new licenses that
4 are, uh, gonna be issued, and also for us ensuring
5 that unlicensed vendors currently are able to take
6 advantage of the opportunity that the new licenses
7 present to enter the formal economy.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Do you have a sense of
9 what the core functions of this office will be?

10 HARIS KHAN: Yeah, so I, I, we— you could think
11 of it in, uh, in 3 buckets. One would be access to
12 resources and services, um, the other bucket would be
13 development of curated street vendor-focused
14 programming, and then the third bucket would be
15 ensuring that our our, our vendors are able to
16 benefit from the historic new licenses that Ezra
17 Piso, um, uh, dedicatedly lobbied for and advocated
18 for last year and early this year, and how Council,
19 um, enacted into law by overriding the Mayoral veto.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you. I was so
21 distracted by the buzzer, I felt like it was a game
show host or something.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Continue.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I, I did— out of the room
3 suddenly. Um, thank you, thank you for that. Um, in
4 terms of, uh, your earlier questioning really focused
5 on all the ways of, um, directing outreach. And
6 obviously, I think what we see across agencies is a
7 real need, um, beyond the QR codes and the, and the
8 actual paper, as human-to-human contact to discern,
9 to, to just clarify all the processes.

10 Um, obviously it's a small SBS has a small team
11 and quite a large mandate with thousands of small
12 businesses who need, you know, real support every
13 day, particularly in a hostile context where the
14 federal government is, um, going after people, quite
15 frankly. Um, is there— is there going to be any
16 additional allocation for that outreach effort
17 related to the street vendor office?

18 HARIS KHAN: So those are, those are, uh, exactly
19 the kinds of conversations we're having with City
20 Hall and OMB on figuring out the right scope as the
21 new licenses come out and as we build this office.
And again, the office— the legislative requirement
was later in August. We proactively decided to hire
our executive director months in advance to start,
uh, the work much earlier to help build the, the

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1 scoping of what this team can do and should be
2 focused on in the next year.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great and is there going
4 to be any overlap with, I guess, MOIA? Will you be
5 able to double team on outreach efforts related, uh,
6 to street vendors and also just at the intersection
7 of what people need and their concerns?

8 LORENA LUCERO: Yeah, um, so we have in the past,
9 and just this calendar year alone, I've partnered
10 with SPS on, on just 4 outreach events. But I think,
11 as I mentioned, I think Karina's day 3, but we are
12 looking forward to working with her, um, and also
13 just to ensure that there is, um, um, given the
14 citywide lack of capacity, just ensuring that there's
15 not, like, overlap and that we're able to coordinate.
16 So yeah, that's part of, um, what our hope will be
17 when we speak with her soon.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great and I just— last
19 thing, because I have you both here, and certainly,
20 um, on the business aspect, I think, uh, we continue
21 to pursue and really want to, uh, stop the whole
22 Willowgate situation, which is going to really
23 negatively impact, um, our businesses across the
24 city. And so just kind of underscore, uh, that, that

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1 legislation, while potentially well-meaning some way
2 many years ago, needs to maybe stay in the past. So
3 for the record, thank you.

4 LORENA LUCERO: Thank you. Um, I have a couple
5 of questions for MOIA. Um, and for this one, I'm
6 gonna give a real-world example. You know, I
7 represent the 21st Council District. LaGuardia
8 Airport is in my district, and recently around the
9 time when Trump was in, um, trying to eliminate the
10 TPS status, status for Haiti. We have quite a few
11 airport workers, so I'm not sure if you're aware,
12 they have to be badged. There's a badging process.

13 So when countries are in limbo like that, you can
14 get a badge for 6 months or 12 months, and each time
15 you have to take time out of your day to go get
16 rebadged. So when individuals are in limbo like that
17 this particular instance, individuals were badged for
18 1 month.

19 So they had a month where they knew they could
20 work, and after that, no idea what was to happen,
21 right? And so when you talk about the fear and
anxiety, um, and this has been going on since Trump
took office in '25 and consistently attempts to
rescind lawful immigration status of hundreds and

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1 thousands of immigrants, how has MOIA stood up to
2 disseminate actionable information on these policy
3 shifts to immigrant workers and small business
4 owners? And any type— does any of that information
5 include any type of mental health assistance?

6 LORENA LUCERO: So, um, multiple parts to your
7 question, but I'll, um, and a good question. I'll,
8 I'll just start, um, with the work that we are doing
9 currently with under the Haitian. So under MOIA, we
10 have a program called the Haitian Response
11 Initiative, which is made up of 7 organizations, um,
12 that are embedded in Little Haiti. Um, part of the
13 effort that we have done there is provide, um,
14 service in the community and not waiting for people
15 to come to us.

16 So we have been having in-person clinics
17 throughout the period to provide different types of
18 services, right? Again, if I had a magic wand to be
19 able to provide legal status to everybody, you better
20 believe that I would waive it and ensure that that
21 happened.

22 Unfortunately, that is not the case. So what we
23 have done and do is that we've been providing people
24 with a review of some pending applications, providing

1 them with the most up-to-date information that they
2 can have. And we've also been supporting and doing
3 direct outreach in the community in Little Haiti.
4 We've also— I know, uh, Council Member Rita Joseph
5 tends to come to the immigration hearings. We have
6 partnered with her in the past, um, to provide, um,
7 again, information and, um, direct legal services to
8 individuals in her district.

9 So that's part of what we try to do. We have
10 been monitoring, um, TPS laws, not just for Haitians
11 but other countries as well. And what we've been
12 trying to do is, again, just affirmative outreach to
13 the community. And then especially with the Haitian
14 Response Initiative, because there's an initiative
15 specifically for Haitian New Yorkers, um, direct, uh,
16 legal services within their community. We do have a
17 clinic coming up on May 28th, um, that we're
18 partnering with, um, the Brooklyn Borough President,
19 um, to again sort of provide an additional
20 touchpoint.

21 And we're also, um, monitoring the, um, decision
 on TPS, uh, via the Supreme Court as well. And then
 the mental health piece, because I mean, multiple
 times both of you have said that, um, anecdotally,

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1 like, the fear and anxiety that individuals are
2 facing is at an all-time high, as can be imagined.
3 Anything to refer individuals to—

4 LORENA LUCERO: Yes. So part of what we've done
5 too, um, there is, uh, several interagency efforts
6 that MOIA is a part of. Um, we have worked closely
7 with the OHMH, especially, I, um, if I'm not
8 mistaken, there's forward-facing material as well in
9 regards to just access and to encourage folks to
10 continue to, um, not only access mental health
11 services but also just health service, period, uh, to
12 ensure that folks, um, have that.

13 So, and all— we've also embedded that within, um,
14 this coalition or initiative that we have under the
15 HRI program where we've brought in people to just
16 talk about the services with some of the 7— with all
17 of the 7, uh, providers so they could share that
18 information widely as well.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Gotcha. And then as
20 MOIA's most recent annual report notes, nationwide we
21 know that immigrants, including undocumented
populations, are tremendous contributors to the
economy. What federal level advocacy has MOIA
engaged in, whether through Cities for Action or

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1 elsewhere, to champion policies that would mutually
2 benefit immigrant population and the city's economy
3 as a whole?

4 LORENA LUCERO: Yeah, I'm just trying to find my
5 page, uh, but yes, there is work that, um, we have
6 done. I'll just name, uh, I'll name one, the most
7 recent one. On, uh, February 23rd, 2026, um, MOIA,
8 uh, as you might know, that DHS proposed a rule which
9 would extend the wait time for work permits to 365
10 days and halt applications if affirmative asylum
-preceding times exceeded 180 days.

11 Um, so because of that, we, um, we, um, connected
12 with- we worked with City Hall to put together a
13 comment to just talk about how detrimental that would
14 be for the City of New York. That's one example
15 within the world, uh, within the space of just
16 workspace, at the workforce space. Um, but there
17 have been others that I just don't have in front of
me, but there have been a couple of multiple touch
points that we've done.

18 And then with Cities for Action, which is a
19 program that MOIA oversees. Um, we've also
20 collaborated with them in the past to submit
21

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comments, um, connected to, you know, detrimental impacts that would come because of federal policy.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Mr. Khan, come back to Small Business Week.

HARIS KHAN: Mhm.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: How does SBS engage with immigrant-owned small businesses during Small Business Week?

HARIS KHAN: So, Small Business Week, um, is like, er, is a federal Small Business Administration designated week, uh, where the federal government engages in outreach across the country through their regional offices. Um, we at SBS, we've expanded from the week to the month and we celebrate May as an entire small business month. And as that being the focus, we've committed, we are helping organize, uh, 4 borough-based large-scale public engagement events. We're organizing that big expo at the end of the month, and across the month there's a series of workshops, webinars related to financing, uh, opportunities, meeting the lenders that provide loans to small businesses.

It's a full month of programming that we, uh, do at SBS, not just that week that the federal

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1 government does. And, and to learn more about all of
2 the ways in which people can engage and all the
3 events taking place. It's nyc.gov/smallbizmonth.

4 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Do you offhand— when
5 is this going to take place, the 4 large public
6 events?

7 HARIS KHAN: It's 6. It's— I, I should— my
8 apologies, it's 6 borough-based engagements. Uh,
9 they should be up on the website as soon as they're
10 finalized. So, and many of the borough-based events,
11 we're partnering with the local chambers as well. So
12 either they're all there, and if one or two of them
13 are still being finalized, they will be there the
14 minute the partners all finalize those events.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: I'll turn it over to
16 Council Member Encarnación.

17 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: I just have quick
18 questions around, um, inspections and the assistance
19 that our small businesses get with inspections. Can
20 you talk about, um, can you walk us through how and
21 when they use— I don't know, I guess Language Line,
uh, you were saying for when an inspection— an
inspector comes into a small business?

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1 HARIS KHAN: So, uh, Council Member, we are not,
2 um, or Chair Encarnación, we're not the enforcement
3 agency. So each enforcement agency has their own
4 enforcement practices. Um, many of them also do have
5 multilingual staff. Some—

6 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Have they asked you
7 guys for support with inspections? Like, if they
8 know they're getting a big inspection and need
support setting up for it, uh—

9 HARIS KHAN: We would actually not want to be
10 anywhere near an inspection that takes place with a
11 small business owner because it jeopardizes our
12 relationship with the businesses where they— it takes
13 time for them to develop trust with us in knowing
14 that we in city government as SBS are out there for
15 them. We're an educational resource for
16 non-compliance. We're here with services. We are
not, uh, folks in uniform. We are not folks they
should be—

17 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: So if they needed
18 support, then they would— would, like, MOIA be a
19 support for them, asking, MOIA?

20 LORENA LUCERO: Um, I was actually asking our
21 language, uh, access team, but in general, yes, if

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1 agencies, um- so just to take a bit of a step back,
2 just so you have this as well, MOIA has affirmatively
3 reached out to agencies under local authority. Just
4 this calendar year, we've met with 40. As issues
5 come up, we, um, we address them.

6 So if, um, that issue would come to us, um, we
7 would do it. I was just trying to get clarification
8 if it has. I just don't have that yet, but, um, we
9 affirmatively reached out to provide support.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yeah, I mean, I think
11 that's a smart way to look at it because I'm thinking
12 about like if the language, uh, translation services
13 was inaccurate for any reason. I mean, these things
14 are extremely technical in some cases, um, and so I
15 just wanted to understand if they would be absolved
16 of whatever violation due to, uh, wrongly translated
17 information.

18 So, but that's, that's more or less what I was
19 thinking of, but I know that we were joined by our
20 Borough President. Go ahead.

21 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you very much.

HARIS KHAN: Thank you. Uh, can, can I just add
one clarification? Uh, Chair Encarnación, you
mentioned, uh, vacancy rate. So in the district, uh,

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1 for Council District 8, uh, we do know that the
2 current vacancy rate hovers around 12.72. In the
3 last quarter, it was at 13.16. So again, it's
4 showing some slight downward trend. But again, just
5 because it's showing that there's less vacancies, it
6 doesn't mean— like, who are replacing the vacant— the
7 stores that are getting closed? There are all these
8 other, uh, levels of questions that one could engage
in. Um—

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yeah, it's, it's the
10 Sonics and the, you know, McDonald's and Burger Kings
that are replacing our small businesses.

11 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you so much.
12 You're excused. Okay, um, yeah, so now we have, um,
13 uh, my, my Borough President.

14 Yes, Brad Hoylman. Good morning and thank you for
joining. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: You can begin when
16 you're ready.

17 BRAD HOYLMAN: Thank you so much. Good afternoon
18 Chairs and Members of the Committee. Uh, thank you
19 so much for convening this hearing. I'm Brad
20 Hoylman-Sigal, Manhattan Borough President, and I
21 have the honor of representing 1.6 million New

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1
2 Yorkers, including half a million immigrants as
3 Manhattan Borough President. Manhattan has a long
4 and storied history as a borough of immigrants. I
5 don't need to tell you that. Um, its economy in
6 particular was built by immigrants, as we all know,
7 and runs on their entrepreneurship, their labor, and
8 their tax contributions.

9 Across New York City, immigrants own nearly half
10 of our small businesses. They make up the
11 overwhelming majority of workers in care, home care,
12 food service, hospitality, transportation, and major
13 parts of our construction work workforce. And yet,
14 as you well know, the federal government is
15 dismantling the freedoms and infrastructure that lets
16 immigrant New Yorkers live here, work here, raise
17 families here, and contribute here.

18 The cost will be borne by every New Yorker.
19 We've all seen the harms of ICE operations on our
20 streets and in our respective boroughs. Less visible
21 but no less consequential is the restructuring of
federal agencies far outside of DHS and housing, food
assistance, employment authorization, tax
administration, public records into instruments of
immigration enforcement. Each of those shifts

transfers cost to New York City. Nowhere is that more clear than housing.

In April, our office submitted formal comments opposing HUD's proposed rule that would effectively force mixed-status families out of federally assisted housing. If implemented, this rule could displace roughly 11,000 New Yorkers, including approximately 5,000 children. In Manhattan alone, hundreds of families and more than 1,000 children could be impacted.

Families who have spent years complying with federal rules would face an impossible set of choices: family separation, displacement, or homelessness. Manhattan's average asking rent has now reached approximately \$5,348 a month. The Section 8 waitlist is closed. Public housing waitlists have been functionally closed for years. For these families, there is nowhere else to go.

HUD claims this rule would free up resources for other households. Its own analysis shows just the opposite. Mixed-status households often generate higher effective rents because ineligible family members pay market-adjacent rates. Removing those households is projected to cost New York housing

1 authorities between \$48 million and \$57 million in
2 annual revenue at the exact moment NYCHA faces an
3 astounding \$80 billion capital deficit and a \$791
4 million operating gap.

5 The downstream costs are even greater. Families
6 forced from federally assisted housing will enter
7 shelter systems, hospitals will absorb
8 housing-related health crises, and NYCHA staff will
9 be pulled away from mold remediation, lead abatement,
10 elevator repair, and heat restoration to carry out
11 immigration verification and reporting requirements.
12 Shelter costs alone could impose additional costs
13 between \$330 million and \$1.27 billion on New York
14 City with no federal reimbursement.

15 The same pattern is emerging in food security.
16 More than 1.8 million New Yorkers rely on SNAP,
17 including roughly 500,000 children. As of April 1st,
18 in response to changes in federal law, New York State
19 has begun removing SNAP eligibility from entire
20 categories of legally present noncitizens, including
21 refugees, people granted asylum, survivors of human
trafficking, and survivors of domestic violence.

These are people the federal government itself
granted humanitarian protection. They are now being

1 stripped of food assistance. Beyond those direct
2 cuts, mixed status households who remain ineligible—
3 who remain eligible are disenrolling out of fear that
4 participation will expose family members to an
5 enforcement. Food pantries are reporting surging
6 demand. Community providers are being forced to
7 backfill what was once a federal entitlement.
8 Bodegas, grocery stores, and small food businesses
9 lose consumer spending when federal nutrition dollars
10 disappear from local circulation. The chilling
11 effects extend beyond housing and food. Workers are
12 hesitating to report wage theft. Families are
13 delaying medical care. Parents are avoiding benefits
14 enrollment for U.S. citizen children. Eligible
15 residents are declining to file taxes or interact
16 with public systems because they no longer trust that
17 the information they provide will remain within the
18 agencies that collect it.

16 Local government cannot fully offset the assault
17 from the federal government, but we can and we must
18 do everything in our power to mitigate the damage and
19 protect immigrant New Yorkers upon whom our economic
20 infrastructure so directly depends.
21

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I urge you to consider the following steps:
conduct a full audit of the direct and downstream
impacts of these policies to New York City;
coordinate multilingual outreach, making clear that
benefit participation by eligible household members
does not, under city policy, expose family members to
immigration enforcement; third, expand city
investment in immigrant legal services; and Fourth,
build protections against data transfer between city
agencies and federal immigration enforcement.

I'm pleased to share that my office is opening an
immigrant welcome center at our northern Manhattan
office at 125th and Amsterdam. This center will
provide, we hope, a single trusted intake point for
any Manhattanite, providing walk-in legal referrals,
multilingual benefit navigation, know your rights
materials, tenant protections, and more. And thanks
to the Queens Borough President for his concept that
we are adopting here in Manhattan.

Our city's economy was built by immigrants. It's
currently being dismantled by federal policy. We
have a moral and fiscal obligation to build a local
firewall that protects workers, entrepreneurs, and

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families who keep New York running. Thank you very much for this opportunity. I really appreciate it.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: No, we thank you for being here.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: No, just saying thank you.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Um, thank you for your advocacy over the years, especially for your support and innovation for supporting our small businesses. Um, I would love to get a copy of those recommendations that you called out. Um, also any recommendations from being— I would say from your office's vantage point, what we heard from SBS and MOIA is that we can't truly quantify the impacts because we're not actually getting the data that we need to quantify.

So any ideas from you or have you— that your office may have heard about how these businesses are really being impacted from Trump's administration's, um, immigration policies?

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL: That's a terrific suggestion. Yeah, there's that old expression, you can't manage what you don't measure. And, uh, I completely agree that data collection is part of the

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case we make— you make as legislators, and me, uh, as
an advocate working alongside you in that regard.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Oh, appreciate it.

Thank you for coming. Have a good one.

I now open the hearing for public testimony. I
remind members of the public that this is a
government proceeding and that decorum shall be
observed at all at all times. As such, members of
the public shall remain silent at all times. The
witness table is reserved for people who wish to
testify. No video recording or photography is allowed
from the witness table.

Further, members of the public may not present
audio or video recordings as testimony, but may
submit transcripts of such recordings to the
Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.
If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill
out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and
wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
have 2 minutes to speak on today's oversight hearing
topic, economic impacts of federal immigration policy
changes.

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If you have written— have a written statement or additional written testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms.

You may also email written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of the close of this hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be accepted. For in-person panelists, please come up to the table once your name has been called.

Now I will call our first in-person panel. Mark Caserta, Van Xelo, Arlette Cepeda, and Ben Guttmann. We can go again with Mark.

MARK CASERTA: Oh, okay. Uh, good afternoon. Uh, my name is Mark Caserta. I'm Vice President of Small Business Support at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. Uh, thank you for the opportunity.

Um, I— in the interest of time, I wanna skip the, uh, any, anything thing about, uh, the struggles of small businesses. I think we all know that. Um, but I do want to tell you about— since October 2020, the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with 4 other borough chambers, has conducted extensive door-to-door outreach in small business, uh, small

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1 businesses throughout the, uh, through the New York
2 City Small Business Resource Network.

3 Um, SBRN staff have visited more than 58,000
4 small businesses, city-wide and provided
5 individualized, no-cost assistance to over 18,000
6 businesses. Um, we have, uh, a direct, on-the-ground
7 perspective of the challenges facing small businesses
8 across the city. Um, I'm gonna skip ahead to, um,
9 ah, earlier this year, our SBRN team conducted a
10 door-to-door survey of Brooklyn small businesses.
11 Among respondents, ah, 65% reported, uh, being
12 affected by tariffs, and 56% indicated they had
13 raised prices as a direct result of these increased
14 costs.

15 In addition to the tariff question, we asked
16 business owners whether immigration enforcement or
17 the fear of such enforcement had impacted their
18 operations. Across Brooklyn, approximately 30% of
19 respondents reported experiencing negative effects,
20 uh, related to immigration enforcement or fear
21 thereof.

22 However, this figure varies significantly by
23 neighborhood. In Sunset Park, 79% of the surveyed
24 businesses reported being affected, and in Bay Ridge,

1 the figure was 45%, um, which um, reflects a mix of
2 businesses that are both Arab and non-Arab owned.

3 Um, I just want to also note, nearly all the
4 Arab-owned businesses that we spoke with reported
5 significant tariff increases and expressed that they
6 could not pass the costs on to customers who
7 themselves are facing financial strain.

8 Beyond our survey data, our team has gathered
9 anecdotal evidence during outreach. Business owners
10 have reported difficulty retaining immigrant
11 employees, as we said. Um, I just want to add, just,
12 uh—

13 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: You may continue.

14 MARK CASERTA: Oh, thank you. Um, additionally,
15 many businesses have experienced declines in foot
16 traffic and sales. We've said that. Um, in several
17 instances earlier in the current administration, our
18 staff visited immigrant-owned businesses, and upon
19 asking for the owner observed employees retreating
20 and hiding out of fear that we were, we were
21 immigrant enforcement officials. So it feels real.

Um, none of this is happening in a vacuum.
Business owners are already navigating exceptionally
challenging times. Um, we've talked about those.

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1 Um, I just want to add, uh, something that Council
2 Member Avilés had said. Um, we are, uh, calling for
3 the repeal of Local Law 75. There are thousands and
4 thousands of small businesses who have illegal
5 workers gates. Uh, this is a ticking time bomb, and,
6 um, we really need to repeal the law as soon as
7 possible. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you for your
9 testimony. Next.

10 VAN XELO: Good afternoon, Council Members. Thank
11 you for the time to testify today. Uh, my name is
12 Van. I'm the Community Organizer at Mixteca, a
13 community-based organization in Central Park,
14 Brooklyn, that has served immigrant, Latin,
15 indigenous communities for over 25 years.

16 As an organization that provides direct services
17 to the immigrant community, we have seen the effects
18 that these federal policy changes have created. Last
19 year, Mixteca was able to serve over 1,000 community
20 members in legal services, and over a third of those
21 services were on completing work authorization
applications.

With the recent federal changes that this current
Administration has created, we see how it has greatly

1 impacted the working-class immigrant community.

2 Having to now pay a \$102 fee to maintain an applica-
3 an asylum application pending while the federal
4 government is slowing down the revision of
5 applications is unjust.

6 On top of these policy changes around asylum, the
7 large presence of ICE in immigrant communities has
8 created an immense amount of fear where community
9 members feel immobilized to the point that they don't
10 feel safe enough to go to work. We have seen in
11 areas like Sunset Park that used to be busy with
12 pedestrians going shopping to local and nearby
13 businesses start to become a bit more empty.

14 After talking to some local street vendors and
15 food trucks, they mentioned how business has also
16 drastically decreased because of all this recent
17 fear. There needs to be continuous protection and
18 support for immigrant communities to access their
19 work safely, getting unemployment support, which is
20 something that they are often not applicable for
21 despite being a huge backbone for our local economy,
and more access to legal services where they do not
have to pay absurd amounts on the fees to merely

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1 survive in the city. Thank you so much for your time
2 and consideration.

3 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you for your
4 testimony. Next.

5 BEN GUTTMANN: Good morning, my name is Ben
6 Guttmann. I am the Executive Director of the Queens
7 Economic Development Corporation. Uh, we're in the
8 business of making Queens thrive, and every year we
9 work with, uh, to support more than 3,000
10 entrepreneurs and small businesses in various
11 capacities across the borough.

12 Despite being the birthplace of the leader of our
13 federal government, Queens finds itself squarely in
14 the crosshairs of this Administration's harsh and
15 ill-conceived immigration policy. Queens is the most
16 diverse urban community on the globe. 48% of the
17 population is foreign-born. 55% speak a language
18 other than English at home. By most estimates,
19 those— number of those languages spoken reaches well
20 into the triple digits.

21 This diversity is the reason we have the most
vibrant neighborhoods in the world, and of course why
we have the most delicious culinary scene anywhere to
be found. But federal immigration policy, hmm, is

1 quieting those neighborhoods and devastating the
2 restaurants and other street-level businesses that
3 make— that call Queens home.

4 Since ICE activity began to accelerate this past
5 fall, nearly every business owner I've spoken to in
6 our most heavily immigrant communities has reported
7 an anecdotal decrease in foot traffic and
8 accompanying revenue.

9 Last November, we sent our team into the field in
10 Jackson Heights and Corona to survey local businesses
11 on this effect. The results were striking. 79% of
12 businesses have reported a decrease in sales and foot
13 traffic. 39% described it as a major decrease. 22%
14 reported that employees have missed work or expressed
15 fear of coming in because of ICE activity. 18% of
16 businesses have changed hours, canceled events, or
17 altered operations, and a further 11% are considering
18 doing so.

19 And of those reported a loss of revenue, 84% have
20 lost more than \$1,000. 7% have reported a loss
21 greater than \$10,000. \$1,000 may seem like
that much to a business at first, but many of these
businesses were street street vendors. \$1,000 in
lost revenue can be their share of that month's rent.

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1 It is the supplies needed to staff up for the next
2 big catering opportunity, or the flight home to visit
3 family.

4 While New York has been spared the disturbing
5 heavy-handed enforcement that so deeply scarred a
6 city like Minneapolis, this fear alone—

7 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: You can continue—

8 BEN GUTTMANN: Uh thank you. Is often enough to
9 take its toll. An ICE agent is spotted in the
10 community, or sometimes not even, then rumors begin
11 to swirl from Instagram to churches, WhatsApp groups
12 to apartment hallways. The fear grounds the
13 neighborhood to a halt. Nobody is shopping, people
14 are staying home from work, street vendors and
15 storefronts close. Hundreds of thousands of dollars
16 in immediate economic damage and countless more in
17 lost opportunities and lost sleep.

18 QEDC operates Corona Plaza Market, a leading
19 model for safe, community-focused street vending. I
20 saw a few of the vendors here earlier. Due to the
21 fear of ICE activity, we shut down the market 3
times, uh, this past -last winter. Uh, it was
painful, and it wasn't always popular with every
vendor, but we refused to facilitate creating a

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1 target for ICE agents who may want to harass this
2 community.

3 When combined with the literal ice from our
4 frigid winter, this was a very challenging season for
5 our vendors, and not every business made it through
6 these down months. And this is just one market in
7 one neighborhood in one borough. To our knowledge,
8 thankfully, no one has been raided in Corona Plaza
9 yet, but the fear is enough. And unfortunately, with
10 this Administration, fear seems to be the point.

11 Thank you to the Chair and her staff, uh, for the
12 leadership on this issue in their own backyard, and
13 thank you everybody for your time.

14 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. Next.

15 ARLETTE CEPEDA: Uh, hello, good afternoon, uh,
16 good afternoon, Chairs and Members of the Committee.
17 My name is Arlette Cepeda, and I am the Interim
18 Executive Director of La Colmena in Staten Island. I
19 gotta say it like that.

20 Alright, so La Colmena is a nonprofit
21 community-based organization that works with day
laborers, domestic workers, and other low-wage
immigrant workers. And our mission is to empower
them through organizing, education, culture, and

1 equitable economic development. Across our
2 community, we are seeing a growing level of fear.
3 Many, many immigrant families are afraid to leave
4 their homes, whether it's to go to work, to shop at
5 local businesses, or participate in daily life. They
6 are instead sending their children to get essential
7 supplies, putting them at risk. This fear is not
8 abstract. It has real economic consequences. Small
9 businesses in our neighborhoods are experiencing-
10 experiencing a decline in customers, and when
11 community members stay home, local restaurants,
12 shops, and services providers lose vital income.
13 These are businesses that often operate in thin
14 margins, and even a small drop in revenue can be
15 devastating.

16 At the same time, small businesses are losing
17 workers. Immigrant workers are essential to
18 functioning of many industries such as, uh,
19 hospitality and construction. When, uh, when workers
20 feel unsafe or are forced to stay home, businesses
21 struggle to operate, reduce hours, or even close. It
has- sorry, my, my, my vision is- it is also
important to recognize that immigrants are not only
workers, they are business owners.

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1
2 Many of them are entrepreneurs and are facing the
3 same fears and instabilities, forcing them to scale
4 back or close their doors. This leads to, uh, the
5 loss of income, and not only for them but their
6 employees and families. As a result, we are seeing
7 increased economic instability across our
8 communities. Families are struggling to pay rent,
9 afford food, and meet basic needs. And we urge the
10 Council to recognize the harmful impacts of the
11 federal immigration policy changes and continue to
12 invest in protections and resources that support our
13 awesome immigrant community and small businesses.
14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of
15 Staten Island.

13 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Mhm. Thank you.
14 Thank you for coming in from Staten Island.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Hmm, I just have one,
16 uh, one thing to say. I mean, I think every borough
17 is the most diverse and cultural and has the best
18 food. We all say it. Uh, so I'm gonna say it for
19 the Bronx and for Manhattan.

19 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Queens is the world's
20 borough though. I'm just saying.

20 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: We'll see. We'll see.
21

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2 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: I do have one quick
3 question for the entire panel. Very- thank you for
4 the work that you do, and you guys are really at the
5 front lines. Um, do you coordinate with MOIA or, um,
6 SBS in any way to kind of help give them your
7 on-the-ground actual survey work and see what you're
8 hearing and how has that coordination or
9 collaboration been?

10 MARK CASERTA: Uh, we work under contract. The
11 Small Business Resource Network is under contract
12 with SBS. Um, so we do, uh, on-the-ground small
13 business work, we share that. I, I think we have-
14 they see our metrics all the time. I don't know
15 whether we've shared the results of that survey or
16 not um but -

17 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: I would recommend
18 sharing it with them.

19 MARK CASERTA: Yeah, yeah.

20 VAN XELO: Um, with Mixteca, we work closely with
21 MOIA giving Know Your Rights workshops. Um, also as,
like, Mixteca, we have done a couple of small
business Know Your Rights workshops around, like,
what businesses can do if, like, an ICE raid was to
occur, um, explaining, uh, giving more information

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1 around, like, public-private spaces and just
2 additional resources. We also try to do as often as
3 we can, like, policy updates 'cause there's so many
4 ever going and like there's different ways that it
5 can impact them.

6 So that's sort of how we've been going about it.

7 BEN GUTTMANN: Okay. Mhm. Yeah and SBS has been
8 a wonderful partner of ours in both Jackson Heights
9 and Corona. I would love to do more work with MOIA
as well too.

10 ARLETTE CEPEDA: Okay. Uh, La Colmena House, uh,
11 is, is the, uh, grantee of the Neighborhood 360 grant
12 by SBS and we have an amazing, uh, corridor
13 invigoration program, which included the launch part
14 of this, um, fellowship that talks about a marketing
campaign for the corridor.

15 So very close with Small Business Services, and
16 we— the team at BEST has done numerous tours of the
17 corridor, so they are really connected to small
18 businesses, and we're breaking that barrier. And
19 with MOIA, we're one of their, uh, IRS, um, IRW
providers.

20 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: How do you think we on
21 the city level, across the city, can help our small,

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1 specifically immigrant businesses, survive, uh, these
2 tumultuous times? What can we be doing?

3 BEN GUTTMANN: It's, it's— I mean, the problem
4 is, this problem is in Washington. For the most
5 part, that's the biggest piece. Uh, I will say I've
6 been very, um, uh, I don't know, pleased is not the
7 right word, but very, very, uh, heartwarming, I
8 guess, to see the response from the local, uh,
9 electeds. And, you know, both on the City Council
10 level and the Borough President's team, uh, have
11 been, as we've been dealing with some of these
12 closures in Corona Plaza, have been incredible
13 partners.

14 VAN XELO: I just wanted to add the— I was here
15 for the sanctuary laws. That's another way that, uh,
16 we can protect our, our businesses by enforcing the
17 sanctuary laws and making them feel safe and that
18 there's due process and not colluding with, with
19 federal agents, you know, making sure that there's
20 accountability measures and that the rights and due
21 process are respected.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay.

MARK CASERTA: I'll just add what you're
expecting to hear from the Chamber of Commerce, and

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1 that's to reduce costs and regulations for small
2 businesses, especially those immigrant-owned
3 businesses. And again, roll gates, roll gates.

4 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: We're on the roll
5 gates. We're, we're working it out. We're trying,
6 we're trying to roll it out, and before it gets, it
7 gets implemented, but we're on it.

8 MARK CASERTA: Great.

9 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

10 PANEL: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: The next panel,
12 Rosario Troncosa, Ysabel Rosario, Martha Herrera, and
13 Sally Weathers. You can begin. Who is— oh, you're
14 waiting for— okay. No problemo. Listo. Okay, I'm
15 practicing. She knows me, I'm trying. Thank you.
16 You may begin.

17 ROSARIO TRONCOSO: Hola, buenas tardes, Council
18 Members. Mi nombre es Rosario Troncoso, soy miembro
19 de la junta directiva de Street Vendor Project. He
20 sido vendedora ambulante en la ciudad de Nueva York
21 durante 6 años. Vivo en Queens, trabajo en Queens.
A causa de la pandemia, ser vendedora ambulante fue
mi única opción ya que perdí mi trabajo de limpieza

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1 de casas, y ahora con la situación migratoria es muy
2 difícil obtener un trabajo. Mhm.

3 INTERPRETER: Good morning, um, sorry, good
4 morning, my name is Rosario Troncoso. I'm a member
5 of the Directors or, or the, um, or the Board of
6 Directors of Street Vendor Project. I have been a
7 street vendor in the city of New York during the last
8 6 years and living in the city of Queens, New York,
9 and, and also working in Queens, New York.

10 Due to the pandemic, I, being a street vendor,
11 was my only option in order for me to survive, right?
12 But I lost my job. I used to clean houses. I used
13 to clean houses of families and people. And due to
14 my immigration status, uh, I don't have a US work
15 permission, or I don't have a green card in order for
16 me to work legally in the US.

17 So my immigration situation is bad. So that's
18 why it's very difficult for me to obtain a job.
19 Okay.

20 ROSARIO TRONCOSO: Ambulantes interactúan con
21 muchas agencias diferentes, desde agencias
municipales locales hasta el gobierno federal.

INTERPRETER: Okay, the street vendors are very
small businesses here in New York City, and every day

1 the street vendors interact with other government
2 agencies, agencies that are different one from
3 another, right? Some of these governments are
4 municipal— sorry, municipal local agencies that
5 support by the federal government. Sorry, as with
6 the local municipal agencies and also the federal
7 government.

8 ROSARIO TRONCOSO: Okay. Hemos visto redadas de
9 ICE en Canal Street y en muchas otras partes de la
10 ciudad. Las autoridades federales de inmigración
11 están poniendo en la mira a nuestros compañeros y
12 necesitamos estar preparados para eso. Le
13 solicitamos al Consejo Municipal que se asegure de
14 que el Street Vendor Project cuente con los recursos
15 necesarios para continuar con la labor de educación y
16 alcance callejero sobre el tema Conozca Sus Derechos,
17 la cual ya está llevando a cabo.

18 INTERPRETER: Ah, mhm, mhm. Alcance callejero,
19 ¿a qué te refieres?

20 ROSARIO TRONCOSO: A que vamos a las calles con
21 los vendedores ambulantes, ah, hmm, a darles
información de con—

INTERPRETER: Okay, okay, uh, we have seen
immigration irraids, especially in Canal Street and

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1 also in other parts of New York City. The federal
2 authorities or immigration, they are looking at us.
3 We are like- they have, you know, the eyes over us
4 all the time. Not only me, but also my workmates.
5 And we need to be prepared to face the strikes,
6 right, that the immigration is doing to us, right?
7 That's what we are requesting from the municipal, uh,
8 municipal council, from the City Council, that you
9 approve and you secure the Street Vendor Project so
10 we can come with the necessary resources to continue
11 our work and also to continue with the work with
12 education and to reach other street vendors who need
13 this information in New York City to protect
14 themselves.

15 And also about the subject that you should not
16 arise- And this is taking place at the moment, it's
17 taking place right now. Um, um, mm-hmm. Hmm.
18 English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Bangla, French.
19 The, the Bangla, okay, okay.

20 INTERPRETER: Um, you know, as a street vendor,
21 we're receiving this card packs that you see here,
these folders, right? And the card packs had the
name, um, Street Vendor Project, Urban Justice
Center, right? Uh, this is written in different

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1 languages. Some of the languages are written are
2 English, Spanish, Arabic language, Chinese, uh,
3 Bengali, uh, the the language spoken in Bangladesh,
4 French. And this teaches also how to administer a
5 business.

6 ROSARIO TRONCOSO: Municipales no nos
7 proporcionan estos recursos, no nos informan sobre
8 cómo protegernos de situaciones como registros
9 ilegales o actividades inconstitucionales. El Street
10 Vendor Project es quien nos brinda esta información.
11 ¿Qué quieres decir con registros ilegales en este
12 caso, en este contexto? Entiendo la expresión, pero
13 ¿qué significa registros ilegales? Como que no nos,
14 uh, ah, venta de permiso que no son legales. Oh, es
15 a venta de permisos que no son legales. Mhm, mhm,
16 mhm.

17 INTERPRETER: Okay, they teach us how to
18 administrate a business, how to provide the rights of
19 the immigrant New Yorkers that are here, and the
20 municipal agencies are not providing these resources
21 to us or to others, and they are not providing
information how to protect ourselves from different
situations, for example, like illegal registrations.
What she means, Mrs. Thomas, is a lot of people who

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1 are evil, they are selling those permits, right?
2 They are fake. They are not really real. So with
3 those permits, you cannot do anything. They just
4 care about money. They take the money just to use it
5 for that. And also in, in constitutional activities,
6 the Street Vendor Project is the agency who's
7 providing this information to us.

8 ROSARIO TRONCOSO: También estoy aquí para
9 pedirles que inviertan en la implementación del
10 paquete de reforma para vendedores ambulantes, Street
11 Vendor Reform Package. Por favor, asegúrense de que
12 el DCWP, así como el SBS, cuenten con los recursos
necesarios para implementar dicho paquete de reforma
de manera efectiva. Muchas Gracias.

13 INTERPRETER: Okay, gracias. Okay, I'm also
14 here, uh, to request from all of you to invest in the
15 implementation of this Street Vendor Reform package.
16 Please be sure that the DCUP and as, as, as the SBS
17 are counting with the necessary resources to
18 implement this package because this package will be
approved and implemented and then effective way.
19 Thank you very much for your time.

20 ROSARIO TRONCOSO: Bueno, sí quisiera agregar
21 algo más, que pues ahorita necesitamos mucho ese

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1 apoyo porque habemos muchos vendedores ambulantes que
2 lamentablemente no tenemos una situación migratoria
3 legal, la cual no podemos obtener un trabajo. O sea,
4 somos demasiados ahorita los vendedores ambulantes
5 que necesitamos obtener un permiso o una licencia
6 para poder trabajar y que no seamos acusados.

7 INTERPRETER: Yes, I should ask you for help
8 because now all the street vendors had the benefit
9 to, uh, to have like a work permit in the United
10 States or to have a green card. So it's very hard
11 for all of us to work with our green card or with our
12 work permit because we have been harassed by the
13 police, been harassed by all the government agencies.
14 And also, you never know, we have to live with this
15 fear the ICE can be coming to us any moment.

16 So really, I would like to appreciate all your
17 help and cooperation so they can approve this
18 package. Thank you for your help.

19 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

20 INTERPRETER: Okay, Miss Thomas, um, she will
21 move one second, will sit down to be able to--

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: No problem. Oh, uh,
Miss Thomas, I'm not sure you want me to translate

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1 again, but it's the same information that was written
2 by her.

3 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay.

4 INTERPRETER: Or she just can't say what she
5 thinks, right?

6 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: It's up to her.

7 INTERPRETER: Um, er, my name is Ysabel Rosario.

8 YSABEL ROSARIO: Uh, my name is Ysabel Rosario,
9 pertenezco a la directiva de NCP. He vendido en
10 Brooklyn durante 18 años. El primer día que yo
11 llegué vendí piragua y- ¿Piragua es hielo? Ah sí...
12 O en español dominicano se dice piragua. Sí, el
13 primer día yo vi \$247, -and I was- I went- my name
14 is, uh, er, tu apellido? Ysabel Rosario.

15 INTERPRETER: Okay, my name is Ysabel Rosario and
16 a member of the direct board of Street Vendor
17 Project. I have been working as a street vendor in
18 the city of New York in the last 18 years and also
19 living in Brooklyn and I'm working in 50th Street and
20 Fifth Avenue, and I've been working as a street
21 vendor since I came from the Dominican Republic to
the United States.

I remember the first day when I was selling
things. I was selling something in Dominican Spanish

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1 called piragua, and this is like, kind of, uh, like
2 ice with water. And I sold around \$247 of this and I
3 was really happy, I got a little crazy about this.

4 INTERPRETER: Sí, entonces, porque hay mismo
5 testimonio, pero yo puedo dar un testimonio que he
6 tenido mucha experiencia. Pertenezco a los
7 vendedores desde el 2012, desde el 2012. He tenido
8 mucha, mucha experiencia, especialmente después que
9 pertenezco a la directiva, pero quiero que ustedes,
por ejemplo, en-

10 INTERPRETER: Okay, I'm a street vendor for a
11 very long time and also very experienced, and also
12 I've been a member of the Board of Directors of this
13 Street Vendor Project since the year 2012. But I
14 really need your help and your cooperation with the
15 situation because, you know, I'm really working for
16 many years in this kind of work and I'm really very
experienced, but we also need your help and support.

17 YSABEL ROSARIO: Pues sí, entonces yo como
18 miembro de la, de la directiva siempre andamos por la
19 Quinta orientando la Quinta Avenida de Sunset Park,
20 Brooklyn. Sale, o más personas nos facilitan, de los
21 vendedores nos facilitan folleto, a veces más otra,

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1 otro folleto para cada actividad, eh, y la gente se
2 siente orgullosa de-

3 INTERPRETER: Yes, and me and my colleagues,
4 including Salik, my colleague here, and other street
5 vendors, eh, we go together to different parts of New
6 York, including Sunset Park and 50th Street and Fifth
7 Avenue, and we're sharing these flyers with other
8 street vendors and people who need it because we can
9 use this to provide this information that maybe they
10 don't know in advance, and they can get to know what
11 is happening with this Street Vendor Project. Um,
12 hmm.

13 YSABEL ROSARIO: Municipio de la, la ciudad.

14 INTERPRETER: Okay. Yes, I wanted to say thank
15 you to all of you for your support. You know, I'm a
16 Dominican lady. I'm also very proud of, for my
17 country and for what, what I am, and also to be here
18 in the New York City Council hearing with all of you
19 and I'm thankful to what you do for us and what
20 you're going to do in the future. And thank you so
21 much for everything.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

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1 INTERPRETER: Um, uh, er, ah, hmm, mhm, like, you
2 know, I mean. Gente, porque da lo mismo. OK, puedes
3 hablar con confianza.

4 MARTHA HERRERA: Buenos días, muchas gracias por
5 la oportunidad de estar aquí. Mi nombre es Marta
6 Herrera y soy representante de la organización Las
7 Doñas. Las Doñas es una comunidad de mujeres
8 migrantes que estamos involucradas en ayudar a la
9 comunidad para sentir de cerca los problemas, eh, que
están pasando en esta comunidad.

10 INTERPRETER: One second, okay. Thank you. Uh,
11 good morning, my name is Malta Herrera. I'm an
12 organizer of a community organization who I'm
13 representing. It's called Las Doñas— oh, sorry, I
14 think the phone went away. My apologies. Okay, this
15 is a net of immigrant women from different
16 Spanish-speaking countries and other countries. Some
17 of them are very hardworking workers, and they are
owners and CEOs of small businesses, and they also
working as street vendors.

18 MARTHA HERRERA: Negocios, alrededor del 48%, son
19 propiedad de inmigrantes. Esto no es solo un dato
20 menor, significa que los inmigrantes no son un sector
21

aislado, son una parte estructural de la economía local.

INTERPRETER: Uh, I wanted to be, uh, clear about something. All these immigration tactics, uh, used by the federal government or President Trump, right, it's not only affecting the immigrant community. It's also affecting the economy of our city. New York City is affecting the economy very badly from the basis.

In this city, almost half of the small businesses that are owned is, uh, er, those businesses are owned by immigrants, right? It's around 48% owned by immigrants and they are property of immigrants. This is not a minor, a minor -data, that means that the immigrants are in a sector that's isolated and it's a, it's a, it's a part of the structural part of the local economy. And that's why I decided to express this information and say it right now. Mhm.

MARTHA HERRERA: Y si hablamos de vendedores ambulantes, la cifra es aún más contundente. Cerca del 96% de los vendedores ambulantes en Nueva York son inmigrantes. Ellos alimentan y sostienen nuestra economía y dan vida a las calles de esta ciudad todos los días. Sin embargo, hoy están estos trabajadores

1 y dueños de negocios, están operando bajo un clima de
2 miedo constante.

3 INTERPRETER: Give me a second. Okay. And we
4 were talking before about the business owners, uh,
5 who were street vendors. But if we're talking about
6 the street vendors themselves, they're even more than
7 that. They're around 90% of the immigrants are
8 street vendors here. And, and they, they are feeding
9 people. And so they're feeding the families, they
10 are supporting the families, and they are giving
11 light to our streets of the city of New York.

12 However, these workers and these small business
13 owners are operating under constant fear. What I
14 mean is constant fear, they are very scared of this
15 immigration race, of this ICE, and this is really
16 terrible to live like this, you know. Okay.

17 MARTHA HERRERA: Tienen miedo de salir a
18 trabajar, miedo de tomar el transporte público, miedo
19 de usar sus teléfonos- teléfonos celulares, sí, sus
20 teléfonos celulares, miedo de ser detenidos o
21 criminales. Criminalizados. Y este miedo no es
abstracto.

INTERPRETER: Okay, they are afraid to go to
work, they are afraid to use public transportation,

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1 they are even afraid to use their own cellular phone,
2 they are afraid to be detained, and they are afraid
3 to be criminalized. And this fear is not abstract.
4 Estabilidad.

5 MARTHA HERRERA: Cuando uno no trabaja, no hay
6 ingresos, y cuando uno no tiene ingresos, no hay
7 consumo, y cuando no hay consumo, los negocios
8 cierran. Es así de simple, así de grave. Lo que
estamos viviendo es un efecto dominó.

9 INTERPRETER: Okay, damos un segundo. Okay, when
10 a person is living in constant fear, the person
11 cannot have stability in the work, right? And the
12 person, and the person works, the person doesn't get
13 any earnings. If the person doesn't have any
14 earnings, the person doesn't consume anything. If,
15 if they don't consume anything, you know what this
16 will cause? They will cause the businesses to close
17 because they are not consuming anything. And this is
18 very simple and it's very serious what is happening.
This is what is happening to us and it's a very big
fear. It's a big, very big effect.

19 MARTHA HERRERA: Menos confianza, menos
20 participación económica, más aislamiento y más cierre
21 de negocios. Y quiero decirlo con toda claridad,

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1 esto no es solo un problema migratorio, es un
2 problema de política pública y de estabilidad
3 económica para toda la ciudad.

4 INTERPRETER: This will be less cost, less
5 economical participation, we will be more isolated.
6 This will also cause more businesses, even small
7 businesses, to close. And I'm going to say with all
8 clarity, this is not only an immigration problem,
9 this is a problem of public health, it's a problem of
10 economic stability, and it's a problem of economic
11 stability for all New York City.

12 MARTHA HERRERA: De miedo e incertidumbre. Y
13 cuando la mitad de la economía de pequeños negocios
14 de esta ciudad depende de inmigrantes, lo que está en
15 riesgo no es un grupo, es la ciudad entera. Un
16 segundo-

17 INTERPRETER: This business, I'm not failing.
18 This is not the problem. They are being pushed away
19 and they are failing for the- because of the
20 structural, structural conditions that are there, and
21 because of the fear they are living, and because of
the uncertainty. And when half of the economy of
these small businesses in this city are dependent
from the immigrants, what is causing- they are

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1 risking this group, and this is affecting the entire
2 city of New York. Okay.

3 MARTHA HERRERA: Lo criminalizando a quienes la
4 construyen todos los días. Necesitamos políticas que
5 protejan la estabilidad, no que las destruyan.
6 Necesitamos seguridad para trabajar, no miedo
7 constante. Un segundo, ¿ok?

8 INTERPRETER: In New York City, wanted to sustain
9 their economy. They should not sustain the economy
10 by criminalizing the people who are supporting this
11 economy or building this economy, or the ones who
12 want to construct or build the economy every day. We
13 need political help to protect this stability. Now,
14 we don't need people who will destroy it. We need
15 security, we need safety in order to work okay. We
16 don't, we don't need any constant fear.

17 -And we need to recognize something very
18 important. It's very also essential. New York
19 without immigrants will not work. It's very simple.
20 New York City without immigrants will not work.
21 Thank you for your help.

 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: New York without
immigrants would not exist?

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1
2 INTERPRETER: Yes, yes, exactly. Yes, she was
3 wondering if she can ask a question about something
4 that she heard about the street vendors. Can she ask
5 a question?

6 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: I'll come back around
7 and let the last panelist come, and then she can ask
8 a question.

9 INTERPRETER: Okay.

10 SALLY WEATHERS: Hello. Uh, good afternoon. My
11 name is Sally Weathers, and I'm the Lead Organizer of
12 the Street Vendor Project. I would like to thank
13 Chair Encarnación, uh, and Chair Thomas-Henry and the
14 committee members for the opportunity to testify
15 today. As the only organization that exclusively
16 serves street vendors in New York City, SVP is the
17 centralized hub for this underserved population,
18 providing critical small business and legal services
19 to vendors since 2001.

20 We respectfully request support from New York
21 City Council to sustain and expand our essential Know
Your Rights education for immigrant street vendors.
A growing workforce of more than 23,000 entrepreneurs
makes a living from the streets and sidewalks of New
York City. According to a 2024 report by Immigration

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1 Research Initiative in collaboration with SVP, 96% of
2 street vendors are immigrants. 81% vend as their
3 main source of income and 65% live in a household
4 with one or more children.

5 Vendors are at an increased risk in the current
6 political environment because they work in public
7 spaces. Many lack access to licenses and permits and
8 are in urgent need of outreach and advocacy to make
9 sure they know their rights. But in languages that
10 they know and from people that they trust. This
11 dramatically increases the need for SVP services as
12 the organization provides accessible, multilingual
13 outreach and education to vendors.

14 From July 1, 2025 to March 1, 2026, uh, just from
15 support from this Council initiative alone, SVP has
16 engaged 392 individual vendors, provided Know Your
17 Rights trainings attended by 161 immigrant vendors
18 and trained 184 volunteers to support with outreach.
19 We are a small team, only 6 outreach staff, but
20 collectively we speak 7 languages on staff to ensure
21 we meet street vendor needs.

With the Council's support, we have created
vendor-specific immigration and human rights
materials in 7 languages: ah, Spanish, Arabic,

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1 Mandarin, Bangla, Wolof, French, and English. Our
2 multilingual team distributes these resources to
3 immigrant vendors through weekly street street
4 outreach to vendor carts and trucks, commissary
5 garages, to the places where vendors work directly in
6 order to equip vendors with the tools they need to
7 protect themselves while vending in public space
8 should they have an interaction with immigration
9 enforcement.

9 Uh, we're also connecting them to legal resources
10 and emergency, uh, planning kits. We distribute
11 whistles so vendors can warn each other when ICE is
12 in the area, and we add vendors to our language-based
13 text chats so they can share and receive
14 on-the-ground updates. Our outreach model
15 prioritizes one-on-one conversations with vendors,
16 empowering vendors to become community ambassadors
17 who share knowledge with their, uh, customers as they
18 have deep connections themselves in their
19 neighborhoods.

18 Additionally, because we are membership-based,
19 when we engage with vendors, we're engaging them in
20 our community and collecting emergency contact
21

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1 information should a situation arise. Thank you for
2 this opportunity to testify.

3 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

4 INTERPRETER: Oh, Miss Thomas, she doesn't have
5 the question written yet. Is it possible to send it
6 by email?

7 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Yes, please. Oh, and,
8 um, a member of my staff will be here shortly so I
9 can direct her to the staff to help address—

10 INTERPRETER: Oh, Miss Thomas, something else,
11 uh, she have an English translation or her testimony,
12 the one she read in Spanish, so she can also send it
13 to all of you. Um, and the translation was done very
14 well in English.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Yes, she can submit it
16 to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Muchas gracias. Thank
17 you very much.

18 INTERPRETER: Thank you for everything she's
19 saying.

20 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. Our next
21 panel, Ahyoung Kim, Carlyn Cowen, Jackie Harrington,
and Hassan Shafiqullah. Thank you. You may begin.

AHYOUNG KIM: We'll begin. Thank you, Chair.
Um, my name is Ahyoung Kim. I serve as the Director

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1 of Programs at the Asian American Federation. We are
2 a citywide umbrella organization working with 70
3 member partner organizations.

4 For many Asian immigrant-owned businesses— for
5 all immigrant-owned businesses, these immigration
6 policy changes compounded with enforcement anxiety,
7 misinformation, lack of trust in legal guidances are
8 affecting workforce participation, business
9 operations, consumer behavior, and overall the health
of neighborhood commercial corridors.

10 And across immigrant commercial corridors,
11 declining foot traffic is weakening daily revenue.
12 And when families are afraid to leave their home,
13 access benefits, or seek services because of concerns
14 for their own safety, local businesses are feeling
the impact through empty sidewalks and reduced
15 spending.

16 We are also seeing financial warning signs in the
17 macroeconomy. One of our, um, one of our partners,
18 Renaissance EDC, has told me that their delinquency
19 rates for small business loans have risen back to
levels seen during the COVID pandemic.

20 Although our macroeconomy on the paper says,
21 like, the stock market is going well and the economy

1 is going well, that's not the lives of immigrant
2 business owners or neighbors today.

3 Last year, AAF and our partners heard significant
4 concern regarding I, I-9 audits. There was no
5 outreach, no in, in-language information, no
6 clarification about what exactly are the business
7 owner's responsibility and how to solve, um, how to
8 solve issues if they have not actually had I, I-9s
ready.

9 In lieu of this reliable information outreach,
10 business organizations organized seminars on their
own to help their members, and those who couldn't
11 even do that reached out to AAF for legal guidance.
12 In addition, many long-time skilled workers left the
13 workforce or self-deported last year, and this is
14 especially significant to the Asian community where a
15 lot of business owners, um, are working- working with
16 employees that may have entered the U.S. legally, um,
with documentation, but later fell out of
17 documentation.

18 And they didn't really see an opportunity on how
19 to correct themselves or where to seek help. This
20 kind of anxiety and fear in our community can only be
mediated through a trusted community infrastructure.

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1 Through our Rapid Immigrant Support and Empowerment
2 Network, which is also called RICE Network. The AF-
3 AAF is coordinating rapid response with Asian medical
4 organizations to provide immigration legal referrals,
5 Know your Rights education, and case management in
6 the language and settings our communities trust.

7 We request the Council to sustain this work and
8 support us by increasing funding for the Legal
9 Services for AAPI Communities initiative that funds
10 the RICE Network. Last year it was at around \$2
11 million. This year we're asking for \$3.5 million in
12 fiscal \$27,000. This will be a targeted investment
13 from the Council in trusted legal access, accurate
14 information, and rapid response capacity that helps
15 stabilize Asian immigrant families, workers, small
16 businesses, and commercial corridors that they
17 anchor. Thank you so much.

18 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. Next.

19 HASAN SHAFIQULLAH: Good morning, Hasan
20 Shafiqullah from the Legal Aid Society. I am a
21 supervising attorney in our law reform unit, and I
used to be the head of our immigration practice
during the first Trump Administration. And thank you
for the opportunity to speak with you today.

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1 Um, my written testimony will address work
2 permits, civil immigration fines, H-1B fees, um, fees
3 under the One Terrible Bill Act, the Small Business
4 Association loan forms, and warrantless arrests. But
5 in my 2 minutes, I'll focus on just a few things.

6 For I-9 audits, we're concerned about— we
7 recognize the concern around the difficulty in
8 advising people what's up with your work permit given
9 the termination of Temporary Protected Status, but
10 then litigation bringing TPS back into play, and then
11 stays from the Supreme Court and the back and forth,
12 um, termination of humanitarian parole, reduced
13 validity periods for work permits, and the
14 elimination of extensions. And so, I think it'll be
15 really important for the city to provide guidance to
16 small businesses around, like, for each of these
17 categories, like TPS countries and humanitarian
18 parole, at a given moment, like, what's happening
19 with work permit validity.

20 The second thing, and I'm, I'm flagging this in
21 particular for the Council Members' constituent
liaisons, there are civil immigration fines that the
Trump Administration is assessing against people.
Um, these are fines that have been on the books since

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1 '96, but no president other than Trump has used them.
2 They used them during the first Administration and
3 now this one, up to \$1.8 million per person for
4 failure to depart after a removal order, which is
5 crazy because it's only if you're willfully failing
6 to depart. But some people have a reason to be here.
7 I might be here with an order of supervision from
8 ICE. I might be seeking relief. I might have
9 deferred action as a special immigrant juvenile,
whatever.

10 And so many of these fines are unlawful, um, but
11 people are getting hit with them anyway. We're
12 litigating this in with some national partners in the
13 District of Massachusetts, hoping to get a
14 preliminary injunction, uh, next week. Um, but you,
15 you might be getting questions from constituents. I
16 just want to let you know, we put together a website,
17 noimmigrationfinds.org, where people can get practice
advisories and, um, sample opposition briefs, both
for unrepresented people and for attorneys.

18 I know I'm out of time, but I'll just flag two
19 more things. We're hearing a lot about the fear in
20 communities in terms of, like, the ICE or warrantless
21 arrests that are going on, and people are afraid to

1 go to stores and walk to their jobs or whatever.
2 We're litigating that together with the American, um,
3 Civil Liberties Union and Make the Road New York,
4 hoping to get a preliminary injunction in that case,
5 hopefully next month.

6 And then finally, um, wanted to flag- I think
7 that was all. Um, my last thing before I stop is I
8 work part-time in a bakery as a baker, and we have a
9 roll gate. And so we're also very- hmm, mhm, the,
10 the Local 1075. So anything you can do, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you so much.
12 Please do not change your roll gate. We're working
13 on it. You may proceed.

14 CARLYN COWEN: Good afternoon. Thank you so
15 much, Chair Thomas-Henry and Chair Encarnación, for
16 the opportunity to testify today. Carlyn Cowen,
17 pronouns they/them. I'm the Chief Policy and Public
18 Affairs Officer at CPC, the Chinese American Planning
19 Council. We serve 80,000 Asian American and
20 immigrant New Yorkers, uh, in all 5 boroughs each
21 year, and we're proud members of the Asian American
Federation as well as the RISE Network.

Our written testimony covers a number of the
issues that have already been brought up today, but

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1 with the time I have, I want to tell you a quick
2 story about one of our community members. One of our
3 kiddos that's in our after-school program, a
4 6-year-old, we learned that her father, a
5 deliverista, had been detained by ICE. Uh, he had
6 missed a routine check-in because he had been hit by
7 a car while on his delivery route, and ICE came to
8 his house and detained him afterwards.

9 Through the Rise Network, we were able to, uh,
10 actually represent him, uh, with our own in-house
11 attorney that is Mandarin and Spanish trilingual, and
12 we were able to offer wraparound support to the
13 entire family because, as you can imagine, it was
14 incredibly traumatizing for our kiddo, for her mom
15 who has her own immigrant immigration case. And so
16 in addition to filing a habeas for the dad, uh,
17 working with ICE to get the appointments in language,
18 going back and forth, we were also able to offer
19 mental health support, support with extra child care,
20 food, clothing for the mom and our kiddo. Uh, the
21 kiddo recently wrote a letter to the judge that said,
please let my dad out of jail. And you can only
imagine just the mental health impact of that. We're
also really pleased to share that we won his release

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1 and the right to remain in the United States very
2 recently, and that's only possible through the Rise
3 Network.

4 And the thing is, the need is so much greater
5 than what we can offer, so that's why we're standing
6 with the Asian American Federation asking for an
7 increase to \$3.5 million this year. I also want to
8 mention that the Trans and Queer Network is putting
9 out a new initiative ask for, uh, immigrant LGBTQ
10 legal services specifically that we're also
11 supporting. And thank you for the work that you're
12 doing, and thank you for your support of immigrant
13 New Yorkers.

14 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. You may
15 begin.

16 JACKIE HARINGTON: This is my first time using
17 this, so I apologize. Um, first and foremost, I want
18 to say, um, I'm very transparent, um, and I hope that
19 I don't offend anybody with the language that to use,
20 but this is the language that I'm going to use. Um,
21 I think one of the issues that we have here in this,
um, in New York City that I have experienced so far
is pertaining to people not knowing their, um,
immigration statuses. And unfortunately, the federal

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1 government has sealed records from some immigrants
2 that do not know that they are immigrants, especially
3 when they are adopted into American families, which
4 of course causes a lot of problems and confusion for
5 when they believe that they're actually a citizen
6 when they're classified federally or city-state-wise
as not.

7 Um, in my experience here, now knowing for me
8 personally that I was, um, an immigrant, but all my
9 life for 40 years believing that I was a United
10 States citizen, there have been a lot of issues with
11 my my, um, employment, my housing, and my community
all in general. And so in that particular instance,
12 I came to New York City hoping for a better
13 opportunity and also a better understanding, which I
14 have gotten.

15 Unfortunately, during that time, I have been
16 human trafficked, I have been raped, I have had
17 directed energy weapons, which is on the US- it's the
US patents on the United Nations website if you wanna
18 look them up. Um, I have had a very horrible
19 experience, and it has trickled down not just from
the federal government, but into the Department of
20 Education, the Department of Social Services, the
21

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1 nonprofit organizations that are supposed to be here
2 to help immigrants and United States citizens, um, in
3 housing, public assistance in general.

4 There's been a lot of fraud on my name since I've
5 gotten here through the Department of Social
6 Services. Um, people like to throw out somebody's
7 name— he left already— uh, Yusef. I do not know him,
8 and I'm not speaking as if he is an issue in this.
9 However, unfortunately, some of the staff members in
10 the Social Services have mentioned his name when I
11 felt that they were doing abuses of their authority.
12 So that is, uh, an issue for me, considering that
13 they are not handling their conduct properly in that
14 particular aspect.

15 Um, I'm sorry. As my last name being Harington,
16 I really was hoping that my experience here, since,
17 um, it was founded by Haringtons, would be a better
18 experience. Unfortunately, I have not had that
19 experience here, and I'm still continuing not to have
20 that experience here. However, I'm learning the, um,
21 intricacies of this particular area, and I just
wanted to put that in as my testimony.

Also, um, I will educate myself better on the
language that I should be using here, and I will

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1 definitely, um, be emailing my interpretation of that
2 to, uh, the testimony email that you gave us. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: No problem, and thank
5 you for your testimony today. Behind you, I have a
6 staffer if you would like to speak with someone about
7 what you're going through, um, that can help you.
8 Appreciate you. You have any questions?

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: No, I just want to
10 thank you all for, uh, really supporting, uh, the
11 folks that are going through this on the ground. I
12 know we're trying to get as much resources out there,
13 trying to increase as much as we can. Fortunately,
14 this budget season has been a little bit tricky for,
15 for us as a city, uh, but I, I know that our co- my
16 colleagues have all been kind of threading the needle
17 when it comes to immigration and, right, and small
18 businesses and housing and how we do our workforce
19 development and all of these things and understanding
20 how interconnected these issues are and really
21 speaking on it during this budget process.

So I'm hoping that we can get some relief for,
for you all and for the people that you serve.

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CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Yes, thank you and I
like when people ask for what they want. Thank you.
We have one more in person— in person, Roberto
Beltre. Roberto, you may begin when you're ready.

ROBERTO BELTRE: Hi, good afternoon, Council
Members. My name is Roberto Beltre. I am the son of
two immigrants from Costa Rica and Dominican
Republic. My parents started businesses in our
neighborhood, and now I have the great honor of
having my own business in Sunset Park. I came out
today to advocate for the reversal of Local Law 75 of
2009, which states businesses in New York have to
change our security gates from solid gates to ones
with 70% visibility by July 1st. That's just 55 days
away.

This ruling proposed in 2009, but I was a junior
in high school. You know, I was not paying attention
to City Council and I went through a full year of
finalizing architectural drawings, you know, having
Department of Buildings inspect my spot, you know,
pass us, all that stuff. Nobody ever mentioned it at
all. It was my neighbor who told me about it just 6
weeks ago.

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1 My neighbor was a majority immigrant, a community
2 right now that is hurting. An estimate of my small
3 storefront was just, what, was \$3,500. My neighbor,
4 who's a Mexican immigrant, had an estimate of \$5,000.
5 As you said, half of our businesses are led by
6 immigrants.

7 The city is asking thousands of immigrants like
8 my neighbors to pay these gate companies thousands--
9 that's millions of dollars out of our communities in
10 just 55 days. This ruling is going to affect
11 thousands of businesses all over the 5 boroughs like
12 me who are just trying to survive. I've only made it
13 to my second year because I have the privilege of
14 operating my business out of a home that my family
owns. If it wasn't because of that, I would be gone,
you know.

15 A cost this high will cause some to close. These
16 are all people who have invested in their communities
17 and in their city and every day a reversal of this
18 ruling is not announced, another business is deciding
19 to waste thousands because of the anxiety that this
20 is creating. This isn't just a financial loss
21 though, this is a cultural loss as well. Because if
we just grandfather these gates, these existing

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1 gates, we're also killing future murals. Because I
2 spent thousands of dollars commissioning an artist to
3 create a mural on my gate, and if we just grandfather
4 these gates, that's going to stop any murals from
5 happening in the future. So please reverse Local Law
6 75. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: We hear you, we hear
8 you, we hear you. Yes, I texted my co-sponsors, uh,
9 are we— there's 3 of us that shared this, I think 4
10 now, that share this, uh, legislation that we're
11 proposing. We're working out the language and
12 putting it out, and we also put out some information
13 in regard, uh, an op-ed, uh, trying to get it picked
14 up by as many news, uh, outlets as possible. But we
15 are trying to go through some of the bids, which was
16 the catalyst for us even understanding that this was
17 now being communicated to our businesses was through
18 our bids. So we're trying, we're hoping to get it
19 passed soon.

20 ROBERTO BELTRE: Great, thank you for your time,
21 and I'll let my neighbors know —what you told me.

CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Yes, please. Yes,
pause on, um, changes right now. Thank you. We will
now turn to virtual panelists.

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1 For virtual panelists, once your name is called,
2 a member of our staff will unmute you, and the
3 Sergeant-at-Arms will set the timer and give you the
4 go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to
5 announce that you may begin before delivering your
6 testimony.

7 Now I will call the first virtual panelist.
8 Christopher Johnson, are you on?

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

10 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, uh, yeah, uh,
11 hello, hello, my name is Christopher Leon Johnson.
12 Yeah, I just had- I just got out John McCarthy.
13 You'll see the video later on, um, about MTA, make it
14 fair, that's his fair -bus fare, uh, bus fare free.
15 But I'm gonna say this right now that, uh, I just got
16 another nonprofit early out at City Hall, outside
17 City Hall, which is working towards this project.
18 And I'm gonna say this right now that they need to
19 step up and really call for, uh, legal providing for
20 deliveristas. They need to call for legal, more
21 legal services for the deliveristas. They need to
step up their plate.

Um, I'll say this right now that, um, shout out
to the City Council for helping out with the NYPD

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1 stop, um, criminalizing deliveristas. But the MTA,
2 um, the, the, the, the, um, City Council needs to
3 step up when it comes to stopping criminalization of
4 immigrants, when it comes to, uh, fare, when it comes
5 to fare evasion. I just got John McCarthy about
6 that, uh, remove the NYPD from the Eagle Team, uh,
7 helping out the Eagle Team when it comes to fare
8 evasion. That's how you really make sure the
9 immigrants don't get harassed more by the, uh, by the
10 NYPD when it comes to this immigration problem in New
11 York City.

12 I'll say that right now. But going forward, uh,
13 going forward, I'll say this right now, the City
14 Council, um, have to make it— had to make sure that
15 the, um, street vendors, which I'm, I'm in City Hall
16 right now, uh, the street vendor does not stop
17 getting arrested by the NYPD going forward.

18 I understand that the City Council was, um,
19 instrumental in implementing a law to where the, um,
20 NYPD is, are not stopping, um, the criminalization
21 of, of, of, um, migrants when it comes to street
vending. But I'm calling on the City Council to make
a bill in the City Council to where that the, the,
the sanitation police department cannot be

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1 criminalizing, um, street vendors. I'm calling on
2 you, Mr., uh, Elise Encarnación to introduce a bill
3 in the City Council to where the STY police are not
4 allowed to criminalize, um, street vendors.

5 Once that happens, I believe that the City
6 Council will be really, um, straight in where they
7 really say they care about standing for the migrants.
8 So I, I can't say a lot, and, um, but I hope you,
9 hope you do that in the future, uh, introduce a bill
for this. And that's all I gotta say.

10 And one more thing, that these is a, it's a lot
11 of things you got to do, you know what I'm saying?

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: So, time has expired.

13 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: So much- I gotta go to
14 another hearing, so take it, take it, enjoy.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you. Next up we
16 have Melissa Chu.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 MELISSA CHU: Hi, good afternoon Chair, Council
19 Members, and staff. Good afternoon, and thank you
20 for the opportunity to speak today. Um, my name is
21 Melissa Chu, I'm the Director of the Immigrant
Protection Unit at the New York Legal Assistance
Group, NYLAG.

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1 Um, you've already heard a lot today about the
2 devastating impact of the fear sowed by widespread
3 unconstitutional and illegal ICE detentions in our
4 community. Um, NYLAG is part of the Rapid Response
5 Legal Collaborative, through which we provide legal
6 services to noncitizens who are detained or at risk
7 for detention, and the Pro Se Plus Project, through
8 which we provide advocacy in and out of court for
9 noncitizens who are facing the process alone.

10 Um, as you've also heard about today, the
11 evisceration of protections like TPS for thousands of
12 New Yorkers, the deprivation of due process rights
13 for asylum seekers, and prolonged waiting times for
14 affirmative benefits have had devastating, um,
15 economic, uh, impacts. But what I wanted to also
16 talk about today was the effect of truncated asylum
17 hearings in which noncitizens are hurriedly ordered
18 removed without the protections of due process, which
19 has resulted in immigrant New Yorkers being deprived
20 of long-term stability and relief and employment
21 authorization in the short term.

The need for— to support pro se immigrant New
Yorkers in appeals to keep their cases alive and
potentially continue their employment authorization

1 has never been higher. These cases are complex and
2 require real advocacy, but are necessary to provide
3 basic protections in immigration court and keep the
4 promises of stability alive.

5 Through our legal services, NYLAG has sought to
6 provide full legal services screenings for
7 individuals who may be losing employment
8 authorization because of the end of protections like
9 TPS. But we've also provided habeas petitions,
10 appeals, and motions for individuals who face
11 enforcement, detention, as well as economic
12 instability. Um, for these reasons, um, the city can
13 support immigrant communities enduring the harmful
14 effects of these changes by supporting
15 community-based organizations directly assisting
16 immigrant communities and legal services agencies.
17 Um, the assault on the likelihood— on the livelihoods
18 of working immigrant New Yorkers only increase the
19 need for high-quality—

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

21 MELISSA CHU: Um, thank you for your ongoing
commitment to, um, our work and our communities, um,
and we look forward to working with you in the
future.

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CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you for your
testimony. We have now heard from everyone who has
signed up to testify. If we inadvertently missed
anyone who would like to testify in person, please
visit, visit the Sergeant's table and complete a
witness slip.

Now, if we inadvertently missed anyone who would
like to testify virtually, please use the raise hand
function in Zoom, and a member of our staff will call
on you in the order of your hand raised. Um, seeing
no one else, I would like to note again that written
testimony, which will be reviewed in full by
Committee- Committee Staff, may be submitted to
testimony@council.nyc.gov up to 72 hours after the
close of this hearing.

This hearing is now closed. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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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 July 20, 2026