

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
AND LABOR

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March 9, 2026

Start: 1:12 p.m.

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing
Room 2

B E F O R E: Shirley Aldebol,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Tiffany L. Cabán
Carmen De La Rosa
James F. Gennaro
Ty Hankerson
Crystal Hudson
Frank Morano
Mercedes Narcisse
Kayla Santosuosso

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

John Kamps
Representative- UFT Paraprofessionals Chapter

Priscilla Castro
Chapter Chairperson-UFT Paraprofessionals

Michael Mulgrew
President, UFT

Anthony Barnes
Assistant Secretary, UFT Paraprofessionals
Chapter

Michelle Hermann
Policy Director, UFT

Donald Nesbit
Executive Vice President, DC37

Virtual

Julian Morales
Self

Nina Rosenberg
Senior Legislative Policy Analyst

1 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a pre-recording test
2 for the Committee on Civil Service and Labor,
3 recorded by Dain Hope in HR2. Today's date
4 is March 9th, 2026.

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6 for the Committee on Civil Service and Labor,
7 recorded by Dean Hope in HR2. Today's date
8 is March 9th, 2026.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, good afternoon,
10 and welcome to the New York City Committee on Civil
11 Service and Labor. Please place your phone on silent
12 mode. Thank you for your cooperation.

13 Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 [GAVEL] CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Welcome to today's
15 hearing of the New York City Council's Committee on
16 Civil Service and Labor. I'm Council Member Shirley
17 Aldebol, Chair of this Committee.

18 Today we will be considering Introduction 692,
19 sponsored by Council Member Carmen De La Rosa, which
20 seeks to address pay disparities for par-
21 paraprofessionals within the Department of Education.
Paraprofessionals are essential to ensuring that our
schools are inclusive, supportive learning
environments for all students.

2 They work one-on-one with students with
3 disabilities, assist teachers in managing classrooms,
4 and often serve as the critical link between
5 students, families, and schools. Despite their
6 importance, paraprofessionals have historically been
7 among the lowest-paid employees of the DOE. The
8 starting salary for paraprofessionals is just above
9 \$32,000 a year.

10 Well below the estimated true cost of living in
11 New York City. Paraprofessionals have testified that
12 as a result of low pay, they struggle to afford food
13 and rent and sometimes work additional jobs. This
14 cannot be accept- an acceptable status quo for
15 individuals who provide much-needed instructional,
16 behavioral, and physical support to students and who
17 play such a critical role not only in the lives of
18 students in schools but in the city's overall
19 well-being.

20 With Mayor Mamdani and Governor Hochul's plan to
21 strengthen and expand universal 3K, we expect an
increase in the demand for paraprofessionals as soon
as this fall.

As of February 2025, there were over 1,000
paraprofessional vacancies, and we cannot risk

2 letting this shortage get any greater. Today we'll
3 hear from the Office of Labor Relations and other
4 stakeholders. Our goal at this hearing is to take a
5 closer look at how to advance pay equity so that
6 paraprofessionals are adequately and properly
7 compensated. We hope to gain a better understanding
8 of how this legislation would ensure that
9 paraprofessionals who make our schools work every day
10 are treated fairly and respectfully.

11 I'd like to thank, thank Committee Staff, Senior
12 Policy Analyst Nina Rosenberg, Senior Legislative
13 Counsel Rie Ogasawara, Maureen, uh, Mar- Pat Node for
14 their hard work in preparing for this hearing. I'd
15 also like to thank my Chief of Staff Sophia Brown for
16 all the work you do for our district.

17 Um, I would like to recognize that we've been
18 joined by Council Members, uh, Frank Morano, uh,
19 Council Member Gennaro, Council Member Santosuosso,
20 Council Member Narcisse, and Council Member De La
21 Rosa.

I'll now turn- turn over to Council Member De La
Rosa for her opening statement.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Good afternoon, and
thank you, Chair, for your leadership, and to the

2 Committee for holding today's hearing on Intro 692,
3 better known as the Respect Check. We introduced this
4 bill because behind every successful classroom in our
5 city there are often paraprofessionals making that
6 learning possible.

7 There are— these are the workers who sit
8 one-on-one with students with disabilities, help
9 children to communicate, regulate, and learn, and
10 make sure every student can fully participate in our
11 schools. The reality is that people doing this
12 essential work are among the lowest paid employees in
13 our school system.

14 Entry-level paraprofessionals can earn as low as
15 \$32,000 a year, and many experienced
16 paraprofessionals still make under \$50,000 annually
17 in one of the most expensive cities in the country.
18 With large gaps in our paraprofessional workforce,
19 the consequences continue to grow in our schools. New
20 York City has faced thousands of paraprofessional
21 vacancies in recent years, leaving classrooms without
the support that students are legally entitled to and
putting additional strain on teachers and school
staff.

2 These gaps also translate to lawsuits and a
3 revolving door of outside contracting that cost the
4 city and the state hundreds of millions of dollars.

5 The Respect Check is about stabilizing this
6 workforce. It recognizes that although long-term
7 compensation should ultimately be addressed through
8 collective bargaining, our schools and our students
9 cannot wait while this workforce remains in crisis
10 and while this crisis grows.

11 At its core, this legislation is about dignity
12 and recognition. If we believe that every child
13 deserves support in the classroom, then we must also
14 believe that workers providing that support deserve
15 wages that allow them to live with stability and
16 respect in, in the city where they serve.

17 I look forward to hearing from paraprofessional
18 advocates and our agency partners today about how we
19 can close this gap and build a school system that
20 truly values people who make it run. Thank you,
21 Chair.

CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you. We'll now hear
testimony from, uh, representative from the, um,
Office of Labor Relations. Oh, um, hold on, I'll,

2 I'll turn to, uh, Ms. Rosenberg to, uh, administer
3 the oath for this panel of this individual.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Would you please raise your
5 right hand? Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
6 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
7 Committee, and to respond honestly to Council Member
8 questions?

9 DANIEL POLLAK: Yes. Thank you. Uh, good
10 afternoon, Chair Aldebol and Members of the Civil
11 Service and Labor Committee. I'm Daniel Pollak, First
12 Deputy Commissioner at the Office of Labor Relations.
13 Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on
14 Intro 692, establishing a new workforce stabilization
15 payment for paraprofessional employees employed by
16 the Department of Education.

17 Intro 692 would require the DOE to provide
18 eligible school paraprofessionals with annual
19 non-pensionable workforce stabilization payments of
20 \$10,000. The payment would be provided as a lump sum
21 and would be subject to proration.

Under the legislation, the requirement for this
payment would be deemed repealed upon execution of a
collective bargaining agreement that increases the
total annual compensation of paraprofessionals by an

1 amount equal or greater to the, uh, proposed
2 workforce stabilization payment. This legislation is
3 an updated version of Intro 1261, which similarly
4 sought to create a payment for Department of
5 Education paraprofessionals.

6 So I'd like to start by saying that the
7 Administration fully appreciates the intent behind
8 this bill. Paraprofessionals work every day alongside
9 other New York City Public School Staff to help
10 educate our children, and we understand the
11 motivation behind efforts to provide them with
12 increased compensation.

13 However, we have significant legal, practical,
14 and fairness concerns with an approach that would
15 provide substantial pay increase for these employees
16 through local legislation.

17 This bill, uh, like its predecessor, is
18 inconsistent with state law governing collective
19 bargaining in the public sector. Since 1967, the city
20 has been obligated under the New York State Public
21 Employees Fair Employment Act, known as the Taylor
Law, to bargain wage rates with municipal unions. The
payments contemplated by this legislation, like other
pay items and terms and conditions of employment, are

2 mandatory— ah, excuse me— are mandatory subjects of
3 collective bargaining under the Taylor Law. And
4 therefore must be negotiated between the city and the
5 Department of Education and the union representing
6 these members. These benefits cannot be imposed by
7 local law.

8 The New York Court of Appeals made this principle
9 clear in Mayor of the City of New York v. Council of
10 the City of New York, a 2007 case, stating that the
11 Taylor Law prohibits local legislative bodies from
12 usurping the executive's prerogative to agree with
13 unions on terms and conditions of employment.

14 Separately, the proposed bill is preempted by
15 state law because it would usurp the authority of the
16 DOE over personnel matters involving DOE employees.

17 Um, beyond the legal concerns, we believe this
18 legislation would fundamentally undermine the city's
19 collective bargaining process and in turn the rights
20 of both the city as an employer and the unions that
21 represent their members.

The city has 150 collective bargaining units
represented by almost 100 different unions. Both the
city and its unions must have confidence that when an
agreement is reached, its terms will govern. If

2 compensation changes and other terms and conditions
3 of employment could be changed through legislation
4 outside of the bargaining process, why make a deal at
5 all?

6 The city would be unable to budget responsibly if
7 the wage increases established in collective
8 bargaining agreements were not the final compensation
9 obligations.

10 Similarly, unions would have less confidence that
11 the agreements they negotiate are equitable relative
12 to those reached by other unions, knowing that
13 additional compensation could later be obtained
14 through legislation outside the bargaining process.
15 This isn't a theoretical concern.

16 In the most recent round of bargaining, uh, the
17 city reached agreements with unions representing
18 98.5% of the city workforce, covering approximately
19 350,000 employees. Addressing paraprofessional pay
20 through legislation outside that bargaining process
21 would be unfair to the many unions that settled their
contracts with the understanding that the established
pattern would govern. Many of whom used funding
available in those agreements to fund targeted wage
increases for certain titles. It would also be unfair

2 to all the city workers who perform difficult,
3 valuable work but did not receive this extra payment
4 outside the bargaining process.

5 Some may argue that pattern bargaining prevents
6 low-paid workers from receiving fair increases, but
7 history shows us that the pattern can be— pattern
8 bargaining can be flexible and can be used to address
9 those issues. Over many years, OLR has worked with
10 unions to find flexibility within each bargaining
11 round's pattern to address specific titles.

12 In the last round, we had a concept called the
13 Equity Fund, which created funding that could be used
14 for specific titles with recruitment and retention
15 issues or other issues, uh, related to compensation.
16 For example, District Council 37 used this funding to
17 provide additional increases for titles facing
18 recruitment and retention challenges, including 911
19 operators, lifeguards, and other titles.

20 OLR remains ready to work with the UFT to use
21 funding within a collective bargaining agreement to
increase compensation for paraprofessionals. While
the bill characterizes this payment as separate from
collective bargaining and states it does not affect
collective bargaining rights, it cannot do so simply

2 by declaring it. Payments to employees are
3 compensation, a term and condition of employment
4 under the Taylor Law, and therefore must be
5 negotiated between the employer and the union
6 representing those employees.

7 No one would argue that legislation reducing
8 compensation or eliminating benefits secured through
9 bargaining would be consistent with the bargaining
10 process. The same principle applies here.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I
12 will address any questions you might have.

13 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you for your
14 testimony. Um, Council Member Morano, do you have any
15 questions before you have to go?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: I do. Thank you, uh, thank
17 you, Deputy Commissioner, not only for your
18 testimony, but I appreciate the Administration
19 acknowledging the important role that
20 paraprofessionals play in our schools. I was just out
21 of school this morning, and I could see how hard all
these paras are working.

We hear constantly about recruitment and
retention challenges in these positions. From the
Administration's perspective, how serious is the

2 current staffing shortage for paraprofessionals in
3 New York City schools?

4 The chair indicated there were over 1,000
5 vacancies for paras. Is that what you're seeing? Is
6 it more? Is it less?

7 DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, thank you for the question,
8 Council Member. My understanding from DOE is that
9 that's about right, you know, maybe a little more
10 than 1,000. Um, but, you know, my understanding is
11 there are approximately 25,000 full-time
12 paraprofessionals and you know, a little over 1,000
13 vacancies.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: The Administration's main
15 defense here seems that the Council can't legislate
16 compensation, and this is very familiar to me because
17 I have another bill that wants to give city workers,
18 uh, a day off if they donate an organ, and they're
19 mounting a similar objection. And it is a little
20 frustrating, but I'm very attuned to the argument for
21 that reason.

22 You argue that this legislation conflicts with
23 the Taylor Law because compensation is a mandatory
24 subject of bargaining. Is it your position that the
25 City Council has no ability whatsoever to establish

2 compensation policies affecting municipal employees
3 through legislation?

4 DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, yes, Council Member, that is.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Are there examples where
6 the Council has created compensation-related programs
7 or bonuses for city employees through legislation?

8 DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, there aren't that I'm aware
9 of. I'm certainly not aware of every piece of
10 legislation going back, but, uh, I'm not aware of it
11 specifically. So if the Council can't legislate
12 solutions and bargaining hasn't yet addressed the
13 issue, what mechanism exists for addressing urgent
14 workforce shortages like the one we're seeing with
15 paraprofessionals?

16 DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, thank you for that question.
17 So I think, you know, you, you did say that
18 bargaining has not yet addressed the problem, and I
19 appreciate that because I think, you know, yet is the
20 important part. There's always the opportunity to
21 bargain more and to, to try to address these issues
through that process. Um, I will say that, you know,
we do have a closed contract with the UFT. We have an
agreement going for— expiring in November of '27.
That said, there have been times in the past when

1 we've reopened agreements in the middle to the
2 challenges. And, you know, one thing I do wanna focus
3 on, I obviously, I testified to the legal issues, but
4 I, I do wanna get across that it's not just the legal
5 issues here. I think there's a really, a practical
6 and a fairness issue here about looking at the
7 workforce as a whole. Because while I acknowledge
8 the, the problems and the challenges that come from
9 having 1,000 paraprofessional vacancies, you know, I
10 think, and I've often, you know, testified in this
11 Committee about vacancies in the city workforce
12 alongside DCAS, that there are a lot of places with a
13 lot of vacancies.

14 Um, you know, we see, I think, some places with
15 vacancy rates far higher than that and I think no
16 matter what, you have to make sure that any approach
17 you take is taken in a consistent way so that you're
18 not treating any particular title or union or
19 employee better than, than others.

20 So I would say that the way to address this is to
21 try to bargain the, the issue. Um, you know,
22 certainly if the UFT came to us and said, we think
23 this is a challenge that needs to be addressed now,
24 we wanna reopen our contract. I can give you an

1
2 example. Back in 2018, I think it was, the UFT wanted
3 to establish a paid parental leave program for their
4 members. And, um, we reopened the contract and
5 figured out a way to, to come to an agreement on that
6 rather than waiting for the next agreement.

7
8 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: In certain schools,
9 especially a special needs school that has a shortage
10 of paras, it seems a lot more urgent than just a
11 challenge. It seems by definition kind of an
12 emergency.

13
14 But you mentioned— I don't want to monopolize the
15 questions, and I appreciate your patience— but you
16 mentioned that OLR remains ready to work with the UFT
17 to increase compensation. Can you tell us what
18 specifically, what proposals the Administration has
19 made, if any, to increase paraprofessional pay?

20
21 DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, we have not made, uh, any
22 proposals as of this time recently. You know, if we
23 went back to past contract negotiations, you know, I,
24 I would have to look to see if we made any specific
25 proposals related to paraprofessionals during those
26 negotiations.

27
28 So if the administration believes the solution
29 must come through collective bargaining, what's the
30

1
2 timeline for addressing paraprofessional compensation
3 and the related crisis that we have with vacancies
4 through that process?

5 DANIEL POLLAK: So, you know, I, I don't think I
6 can give a specific timeline today. I will say that
7 the, you know, the bargaining for the next round,
8 bargaining will have to occur at some time. Um, the
9 contract with DC 37 expires in November of this year.
10 Um, the UFT is later November of next year, but our
11 contracts are starting to expire.

12 So there certainly will come a time soon when we
13 are engaged, kind of fully engaged in bargaining
14 again. We're always engaged in bargaining, always
15 ready to talk but there will come a time soon when we
16 are in the room for a new period and I think issues
17 like this will be front and center when we, when we
18 get to that point.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: So paraprofessionals are
20 expected to wait until the next full bargaining cycle
21 before seeing any relief?

DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, I, I would say that we are
willing to sit down and talk to the UFT before then
about solutions. You know, it needs to be— make sure—
we need to make sure it's an approach that is fair to

2 everyone, but we are more than willing to sit down
3 and talk about it and see if we figure something out.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Uh, final question. So a
5 lot of paras in this city earn barely enough to live
6 in the communities that they serve. Do you believe
7 the- and does the Administration believe that the
8 current compensation structure is adequate to recruit
9 and retain the workforce that our schools need?

10 DANIEL POLLAK: Um, so I would, you know, in terms
11 of recruitment retention of the employees, I defer
12 to- have to defer to the Department of Education on
13 their view of that. You know, I do - will say, you
14 know, personally, and I've spoken about this before,
15 there are lots of the employees that I would love to
16 see paid more. You know, so many of the employees do
17 incredibly valuable work, and paraprofessionals are
18 definitely one of them. And I think in an ideal
19 world, we would, we would pay everyone a lot more.
20 Obviously, there are, you know, fiscal realities we
21 have to deal with. And as I said, you have to make
sure it's an approach that addresses everyone in that
situation, not just, you know, one group.

So, you know, I, I certainly understand the, the
view. This Administration has obviously talked a lot

2 about affordability and, you know, their view is— the
3 view of the Administration is clear on that.

4 So it's an— it's a concern but like I said, any
5 solution, we really have to look globally and make
6 sure it doesn't, um, kind of spill over too much in a
7 way that, that is unfair to others.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you and thank you,
9 Chair, for letting me go an extra minute.

10 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you, Council Member.
11 Um, Council Member, um, I, I do have a couple of
12 follow-up questions. If I may, before I turn it over
13 to Council Member Narcisse.

14 So, I'm done. Thank you. I'm being respectful.
15 Um, so the, the last time this Committee discussed
16 paraprofessionals, um, OLR stated that they're— that
17 you were not aware of attrition analysis that was
18 undertaken for paraprofessionals and are there plans
19 to undertake this analysis?

20 DANIEL POLLAK: Um, I believe that, um, in the
21 last— thank you, Chair, for the question. Um, I
believe that in the last hearing, um, the Department
of Education had testified regarding attrition rates,
that their retention rates were around 95%. Um, I,
I'd have to review the testimony, but, uh, the DOE

2 would be the one doing any attrition analysis. I can
3 certainly follow up and see if they have those
4 numbers available to provide to the Committee.

5 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: And I have a follow-up, uh,
6 follow-up on, on the comment you made about reopening
7 the contract. Are there provisions in the current
8 collective bargaining agreements with DC 37 or UFP
9 that allows for a reopen-er to discuss, uh, any of
10 the, the job titles?

11 DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, there are not any explicit
12 provisions, but, um, in the past that has not
13 prevented OLR from, you know, agreeing to, to do so.
14 Obviously we can agree to whatever we want to agree
15 to.

16 So, um, in the past, OLR has reopened contracts
17 even that did not have explicit reopen or provisions
18 to talk about kind of challenges, including working
19 out with the UFT a paid parental leave program.

20 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: So what has been the barrier
21 to, um, uh, negotiating better compensation for this
group of, uh, of job titles or this group of workers
that are clearly - it feels like we're at a crisis
point with the number of vacancies that's only gonna

1
2 grow because of the need, um, coming with the
3 expansion of 3K, uh, the 3K program.

4 DANIEL POLLAK: Um, you know, I, I don't think I'd
5 say that there's something preventing it. I think
6 that, you know, we have not received a request from
7 the UFT. We normally do not, um, start, you know,
8 engaging in bargaining if a union doesn't, especially
9 midterm, if a union doesn't indicate a desire to do
10 so. They have not come to us and asked to bargain.
11 They've, they've only kind of come forth with, with
12 this legislation. We have not, uh, we have not gotten
13 any kind of requests from them to, to discuss this
14 issue.

15 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Okay. Um, and, um, so when
16 OLR negotiates with the, with the bargaining
17 representative, um, that represents multiple, you
18 know, job titles, um, like UFT, for example, um, do
19 you consider the negotiations, uh, for each civil
20 service title independently, or is everyone subject
21 to just the same, uh, pattern?

DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, so our approach, you know, as
I said, we try to be flexible. So, you know, under
the pattern bargaining approach that the city, you

1 know, engages in, typically what we look at is the
2 total cost of an agreement for a bargaining unit.

3 So, you know, in the case of some unions, it's
4 very small. We have 100-person bargaining units, we
5 have 3-person bargaining units, and then we're just
6 looking at that title. If you only represent one
7 title, we, we look at one title but for a union like
8 the UFT or DC37, we look at kind of the cost of the
9 whole agreement. And if a union wants to put more
10 money towards one title, then we will look at that.
11 We'll look at the total cost and kind of evaluate it
12 in a global context.

13 We won't say, No, you can't give more to one
14 title than to another. That's not something we would,
15 we would say to a union. We would certainly want to
16 discuss it, discuss the reasons for focusing on one
17 title rather than another, but we have done so in the
18 past and would continue to do so.

19 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Okay. Um, Council Member
20 Narcisse, you had a question?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Oh yes, I do. Okay. Um,
I was following the— hmm, mhm, like, you know, I
mean. Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity
to speak and ask some questions.

2 Um, I have a lot of writing here, but I have to
3 get to the point, that's not my hearing. But I want
4 to say, historically, how has paraprofessional pay in
5 New York City changed over the past 10, 20 years, and
6 has it kept, I mean, pace with the rising cost of
living in the city?

7 DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, thank you for the question,
8 Council Member. Um, I, you know, to do a full
9 analysis, I would have to get back to you but, you
10 know, in the past, it would vary depending on whether
11 you're looking at 10, 20 years. Um, the last 10
12 years, I think wage increases have generally been
13 somewhere around 2.5, 3%. Um, I think if you look at
14 the, the probably past couple decades and you looked
15 at the, you know, wage increases employees have
16 generally received versus inflation, you'd find that
17 in low inflation periods, they tend to— it's the
18 wages tend to exceed inflation. In, in high inflation
periods, they, they tend to be a bit lower, but I
don't have a kind of across some time period analysis
right now I can speak to.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Is the Administration
20 tracking how many paraprofessionals leave the system
21 each year due to the wages?

2 DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, so I would have to, to confer
3 with the Department of Education to get that
4 information. I know they do obviously track who
5 leaves. I don't know if they have any kind of exit
6 interview process set up where they are able to, um,
7 kind of assign a reason?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Uh, for many reasons,
9 I'm reading, I'm reading from your quote here. Both
10 the city and the, and its unions must have confidence
11 that when an agreement is reached, its terms will
12 govern.

13 If compensation changes could instead be enacted
14 through legislation outside of the process, Why make
15 a deal at all? This is interesting to me because when
16 the paraprofessional cannot pay the bill, knowing the
17 rising cost and all this.

18 So now if they're coming to us, and if I'm
19 correct, uh, from what you said, now if we cannot
20 pass any bill to change that, their children, their
21 home, what they eat, have to wait? How do we do it?

DANIEL POLLAK: So I, I completely appreciate the,
the question and the sentiment and the, the thought
behind that. And, you know, as I said, I think there
are ways that we could have the discussion through

1
2 the bargaining process where this should be. Um, but,
3 you know, the other thing I just say is that we, we
4 need to be conscious of everyone because they are
5 not, you know, they're not the lowest paid. They,
6 they, they're not the lowest paid employees in the
7 city necessarily. There are a lot of other employees
8 who, who make similar wages and, you know, whatever
9 we end up doing, you know, whatever approach we would
10 take, I think we want to be sure that we're fair to
11 every city worker.

12 So that was, you know, when OLR talks about
13 pattern bargaining, and I know a lot of people
14 question it, a lot of people say this seems overly
15 rigid. Um, for us, it really is about making sure
16 that we're thinking of the, the whole picture about
17 every union, every employee, and that we're not, you
18 know, just taking one group at a time and maybe, you
19 know, treating them differently than everyone else.

20 So, you know, I understand the sentiment. I, I
21 wish I had an answer that said we could give \$10,000
to every city employee. Um, but, you know, as you
know, we, we have fiscal constraints as well, so.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: To me, it's more than
sentiment. This is people's lives. And this is what

2 they eat and as a healthcare professional, that's
3 their health.

4 Many schools struggle to recruit
5 paraprofessionals because the pay does not reflect
6 the responsibilities of the job. Do you believe this
7 payment will make the profession more suitable to
8 help bring more qualified candidates into the system?

9 DANIEL POLLAK: So I'm not the best person to
10 speak about kind of the recruitment of
11 paraprofessionals. You know, I, I will say obviously,
12 you know, offering more money helps recruit -It's
13 not, uh, you know, generally speaking, that helps. It
14 doesn't always- it's not always a magic bullet. Some
15 jobs, there are challenges beyond money that, um,
16 that, that impact recruitment and I think there are
17 always other strategies you can look at that aren't
18 just money, but I'm not gonna sit here and tell you
19 that, like, adding \$10,000 wouldn't make a difference
20 and I wouldn't say that. Um, but, you know, I, I
21 would have to ultimately on, on all the nuances have
to defer to DOE.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Hmm. You cannot say it,
20 and I cannot say it either because those are the
21 people that educating our kids every single day, more

1
2 than even sometimes the teachers. Their hands
3 overwhelmed, and we know that and I don't want to
4 beat on you, but I'm just saying my job is to listen
5 to them and coming to a solution, because there's a
6 problem in the house right now.

7 It's education for our children. They're
8 educating our kids. They're helping us to build the
9 future that we all talk about.

10 Um, You talk about- I'm about to finish Chair.
11 Uh, you will sit down. I mean, if I quote you
12 correctly, you want to sit down, right? So to listen,
13 to see how- because based on the question of my
14 colleagues, but how long they've been crying, saying
15 that this is not working and they're asking for help.
16 So you never had a chance to really dive into it to
17 see how the best way you can help?

18 DANIEL POLLAK: Um, I wouldn't say that. I would
19 say that, you know, we have- we negotiate agreements
20 with the UFT and other unions. Those negotiations are
21 lengthy, and ultimately we come to an agreement that,
that both parties, you know, decide to put out to
their- that decide to live by, that the city agrees
to, that the union agrees to put out to their

2 membership, that the membership ultimately ratifies.
3 And sometimes you can't address everything.

4 Sometimes maybe an issue wasn't raised as
5 prominently as it, as it should have been. Sometimes
6 maybe the issue wasn't as prominent when we were
7 sitting down as it has become after that. And so
8 that's why either, you know, when that happens, you
9 can either come sit down, try to find a way to, to
10 reopen bargaining and see if that works for both
11 parties, because ultimately it has to work for both.
12 Um, or you can wait until your contract expires. I
13 think those are really the, but, but it always should
14 be through that process is my view, because truth is
15 there are always, you know, there are two parties in
16 it, right?

17 So the fact that this was— there was not anything
18 in an agreement, you know, that was related specific
19 to paraprofessionals. It wasn't just OLR's agreement.
20 It was an OLR and UFT agreement and any, I think, any
21 effort to, to change that and to go back and change
that should involve both parties discussing it as we
so frequently do.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: It is difficult, and I'm
gonna stop right here. This is not my hearing, but

2 their bills cannot wait, their children cannot wait.
3 And, uh, I understand the bargaining, I understand
4 all that. This have to take place. But in the
5 meanwhile, you cannot tell someone that cannot pay
6 the bills to wait. If they wait, they have to wait
7 for a purpose, and a good one too. So I hope they get
8 that extra. Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Council- thank you, Council
10 Member Narcisse. Uh, uh, Council Member De La Rosa.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you, Chair, and
12 good to see you again. Um, look, I think as the
13 former Chair of this Committee, I, I think that my
14 colleagues and I perfectly understand the importance
15 of collective bargaining as the cornerstone of
16 unionized work.

17 Um, and we also understand the bounds of the laws
18 when it comes to the jurisdiction of the Council, but
19 the question I have for you; do you know how much the
20 city pays in, um, Carter cases a year?

21 DANIEL POLLAK: Uh, those are not numbers I have
at hand. Um, I know it's, it's very significant.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: \$1 billion annually.
And would you agree with me that the city's legally

2 mandated to provide special education, um, to
3 children who need it?

4 DANIEL POLLAK: Um, so, you know, I'm certainly
5 not an expert in that area, but that's my
6 understanding.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: It is. They are
8 legally mandated and so, you know, here what we have
9 is the picking and choosing of how we, um, apply law
10 because if we have a legal mandate to provide special
11 education supports to children and we're spending \$1
12 billion annually, then there is both a legal argument
13 and a fiscal argument as to why this legislation
14 makes sense.

15 And I understand that in collective bargaining,
16 you all will get into the details of how that happens
17 and and where compensation structures happen. But I
18 would argue that in this moment, when we have a legal
19 mandate to provide services for families, we can't
20 wait because this is a workforce that is in crisis. I
21 will- I would be the first one. I think all of us
here, I can- I can't speak for all of us, but I think
I have a, a good sense that all of us here, I've seen
all of these ladies at picket lines very recently for
the nurses, would all stand in favor of ensuring that

1 workers across this city are fairly paid and that,
2 that, then that, that negotiation is done in a fair
3 and comprehensive way and I understand how the
4 pattern works. But you have a situation with the
5 paras where that pattern is creating and growing a
6 crisis for a workforce that is necessary inside our
7 schools right now.

8 And so the Council is attempting with this law to
9 try and mitigate that crisis before it balloons out
10 of control, because it's costing us \$1 billion
11 annually.

12 The fiscal impact statement for this legislation
13 is \$400 million. So there's a cost savings there and
14 in a time where we have a gap to close, I would think
15 I, and I'm not saying that all of the \$1 billion
16 would be closed by this particular bill, but I think
17 it would make a dent in the type of supports that,
18 uh, the most vulnerable students in our city need.

19 Um, and so I wanna speak to that. I wish that the
20 DOE was here. I'm not gonna, um, lie and, and, and I
21 wish that they were here to answer some of the
questions. I understand that they couldn't be here
today, but, uh, as we navigate the vacancy rates
across the city for agencies, I was glad to hear, um,

1
2 that this Administration is looking at policies like
3 the 2-for-1 hire, which have created ballooning
4 vacancies in agencies. And so I think we can walk and
5 chew gum at the same time. We can tackle vacancies by
6 changing policies that are not working, like the
7 2-for-1 hire rule, and pass legislation to make sure
8 that we're keeping with our legal mandate.

9 Um, and then I, I don't know if you have the, the
10 authority to speak to this, but it is my
11 understanding that as a candidate, the Mayor
12 supported paraprofessionals. Um, do you have reason
13 to believe, um, that Mayor Mamdani would support this
14 type of legislation?

15 DANIEL POLLAK: Um, so I can't speak specifically
16 to that. Um, I will say that, you know, from, from
17 our perspective, it's not a matter of, um, or from
18 OLR's perspective, you know, it's not a matter of
19 saying, you know, we're not sitting here saying, oh,
20 you know, we don't think that-- we think the pay is
21 perfectly fine where it is, there's no problem
22 whatsoever, like, we don't you know, this shouldn't
23 be an issue.

24 I think we're just saying that it has to be
25 addressed in a more global way and through the, the

1
2 kind of process that it's supposed to be addressed
3 through. Um, you know, there obviously are the, the
4 fiscal realities we face. Obviously the Mayor's
5 talked about those realities and, you know, whatever
6 you do, obviously you talked about the \$400 million
7 impact of this bill, which isn't insignificant.

8 Um, and then, you know, beyond that, there's what
9 would come next for other titles if, this, uh, this
10 troop got something like, like that. So it wouldn't
11 be limited, I think, to 400 million.

12 So ultimately, you know, it's about balancing
13 those realities but I think, you know, we are
14 interested in, in, you know, making sure that
15 whatever we do going forward in bargaining, that
16 we're looking at issues like this. I will say in the
17 last round of bargaining, you know, we, we tried to,
18 to some degree, focus on recruitment and retention
19 issues because when we were engaged in bargaining
20 back in 2023, I know Council Member De La Rosa, you
21 called a lot of attention to this. There were a lot
of recruitment retention challenges. There still are.
I think we've made a lot of efforts to, to try to,
um, not, you know, certainly eliminate those issues,
but try to help with those issues.

1
2 We did things like equity funding. We did things
3 like that, that, um, were kind of efforts to, to
4 enhance our ability to get people and they may not
5 have been perfect. They may not have solved the
6 problem permanently but I think as we look towards
7 new bargaining, whether it's the next round or a
8 union's desire to reopen a contract, you know, and,
9 and, and talk more, we would be focused on that issue
10 then as well.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Well, we're looking
12 forward to obviously working with OLR. I think that
13 it is important to note that, um, this
14 Administration, this Council, all of us have been
15 laser-focused on affordability. I can think of no
16 other way to make the city more affordable than to
17 pay people the wages that they deserve. These
18 unionized workers, these essential workers of our
19 city. I have a, a child in the New York City Public
20 School system. I see the work that they do every
21 single day to make sure that our children are safe
and educated and as the Chair noted, with the
expansion of programs like 2K and 3K, um, we're gonna
need more of them, not just to meet that 1,044

2 vacancy, but we need to expand this workforce and we
3 can attract them.

4 I mean, \$30,000 a year when someone is paying
5 \$2,000 rent a month. I mean, you can, you can qualify
6 for food stamps with that, with that wage and so, we
7 have to take into account that these are real human
8 beings doing real important work, and that we all
9 need to collectively come together to find the
10 solution. Thank you, Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you, Council Member De
12 La Rosa. Um, I do have a— I mean, I do have a
13 question. I— it's actually more of a comment. Um, you
14 know, I worked in labor for many years, public sector
15 and private sector.

16 Um, and I understand, you know, that pattern
17 bargaining is meant to kind of make a level playing
18 field, but that doesn't work when you have such
19 structural pay disparities that are based on a number
20 of issues. Could be gender bias, racial bias, uhm,
21 and I, I see, you know, jobs like these that are you
know, largely women, uh, women of color, uh, nothing
against the men out there, but the, the reality is
that there's a structural bias built into, uh, you
know, the wages that are paid to, uh, certain groups

1 of workers, and the pattern bargaining does not fix
2 that.

3 Um, my other comment is that, you know, the UFT
4 has come to the City Council to try to alleviate this
5 problem. To me, it seems like they had no other
6 recourse but to come to the City Council because they
7 had— they, they were unable to reopen bargaining to,
8 uh, deal with this particular issue. So, um, yeah.

9 DANIEL POLLAK: Thank you, um, Chair Aldebol and
10 that, you know, I, I do want to say, obviously you
11 know, the— this Administration has not engaged in a,
12 you know, round of collective bargaining yet.
13 Obviously, when— as we do bargaining, every
14 administration has different priorities. And, you
15 know, certainly this administration, I think, should
16 have an opportunity to engage in that process with an
17 eye towards some of— some of their priorities, which
18 I think are, you know, many of those that— that, uh,
19 too many have spoken to.

20 Um, so I think there— there are opportunities. I
21 think there are opportunities for a pattern to kind
of recognize those realities and try to deal with
them. Um, you know, not saying that every pattern

1
2 that we've had did that. There are some— maybe some
3 patterns didn't do enough.

4 We have been making an effort in recent ones to,
5 to set aside funding for uses like this. Um, and, you
6 know, I think we look forward to trying to continue
7 to look at how we can, you know, within the, the
8 constructs that we have, within the— in a way that's
9 fair to everyone, how we can, you know, try to deal
10 with situations like the one the Council is paying
11 attention to.

12 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: So, and based on, on your
13 testimony today, are you saying that— and, and also
14 based on, you know, the Mayor's commitment to, uh,
15 raise wages, uh, for this group of workers and
16 others, uh, are you saying that, uh, the city OLR
17 would, if UFT were to approach you or DC 37 were to
18 approach you you about reopening the contract to
19 increase compensation for this group of workers, that
20 you would, uh, agree to do so?

21 DANIEL POLLAK: Um, you know, I'm not able to, to
make a commitment about formally reopening. I will
say we'll always have a discussion. You know, we've,
we've done it in the past, and if they came to us and
said that, we would, we would have the discussion

2 about what the possibilities are and whether we're
3 willing to do that. We're always, we're always
4 willing to talk. We're always willing to sit down,
5 listen. We, we're not— we don't normally just say you
6 have a closed contract, you know, go away. We're
7 always willing to talk.

8 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you. Um, uh, welcome,
9 Council Member, uh, Cabán. Do you have any questions?
10 No? Okay, thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

11 DANIEL POLLAK: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: So, okay, so I, I I'm now
13 going to open the floor for, uh, to public testimony.
14 Before we begin, I remind members of the public that
15 this is a formal government proceeding, that decorum
16 shall be observed at all times. As such, members of
17 the public shall remain silent at all times.

18 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
19 to testify. No video recording or photography is
20 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
21 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.

2 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
3 fill out an appearance— an appearance card with the
4 Sergeant-at-Arms and wait for your name to be called.
5 Once you have been recognized, you will have 2
6 minutes to speak on today's legislation, Intro 692.

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

14 When you hear your name, please come up to the
15 witness panel. I see— it's amazing— President Michael
16 Mulgrew is already here. He said, I'm ready. Uh, I
17 would, uh, call up Vice Chair Anthony Barnes, uh,
18 Michelle Herman, Policy Director for UFT, John Camp—
19 John, John Camps, Vice Chair for paras—
20 paraprofessionals, and Chapter Chairperson also for
21 UFT, uh, Priscilla Castro. Good, got everybody.
Where's Priscilla? Hey, Priscilla. Okay, okay, we're
waiting for— I hear Bridget, I hear Bridget directing
people behind me. Um, okay, thank you.

2 MICHAEL MULGREW: Okay, thank you so much. Uh,
3 thank you, Chair, and, uh, we do appreciate you
4 having this hearing. We're very happy at this first
5 hearing. So thank you so much, uh, especially on this
6 important issue. Um, we are submitting testimony, and
7 I just want you to know that we also are submitting
8 over 50 testimonials from paraprofessionals who are
9 all working right now inside of schools.

10 After listening to OLR's responses, you know, I'm
11 getting a little disgusted with this whole thing, and
12 I appreciate the questions from City Council. They're
13 fact- they're that they continue to sit back and say
14 it's an, uh, it's a subject of collective bargaining.
15 I want to be clear and make sure that you and
16 everyone in public understands their position inside
17 of a collective bargaining venue is that other
18 workers must pay for this, not the city. And that is
19 why this is getting more and more, in what I'm
20 concerning, to be very, very ugly because the reality
21 is we are short thousands of paraprofessionals. Every
one of those paraprofessionals that we are short is a
crisis for a family and a child.

Is the off of- Office of Labor Relations of New
York City- what is their job? Is their job to go

1
2 after workers and try to make other workers pay for
3 their mistakes, or is their job to try to staff the
4 City of New York's agencies properly for them to
5 deliver the services that are required? And when it
6 comes to children, the fact that they continue to
7 hold to this ridiculous argument— and it is only an
8 argument, it is not a law, it is not a regulation, it
9 is not a requirement.

10 The city can do this. It is OLR and OMB's
11 position to continue to cause great pain to children
12 and their families, and they hide behind something
13 that is completely untrue. There is nothing that says
14 the City of New York must adhere to this pattern of
15 saying other workers need to pay for the raises. You
16 cannot hire the people you need to do the job. Let's
17 just start with simple things. The, the cost of
18 living in New York City, and that a paraprofessional
19 starts at \$30,000.

20 A paraprofessional in Boston is— starts at
21 \$41,000, and their cost of living is much less. So we
appreciate this hearing, and again, we thank you for
introducing this bill, and we just say enough is
enough and I think we should do a hearing about what
is the actual job of OLR of New York City.

2 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you. Um, next.

3 PRISCILLA CASTRO: Good afternoon. Thank you,
4 Chair. My name is Priscilla Castro. I'm the
5 Chairperson for the paraprofessionals in New York
6 City, all 26,000. No, no, it's okay. Um, thank you,
7 uh, Carmen De La Rosa for introducing this bill. This
8 respect check means a lot for all the
9 paraprofessionals in New York City.

10 Collective bargaining does not work. The 3%, 4%
11 that we have been enduring all these years in
12 collective bargaining is a disgrace. \$33,000? Our
13 paraprofessionals cannot survive. Our students need
14 our paraprofessionals. The paraprofessionals are the
15 backbone of the classroom. It's not right.

16 We talk about 1,000 paraprofessionals. It's way
17 more than that. 3,000 to 4,000 paraprofessionals
18 needed. These are students without services, students
19 with disabilities that need paraprofessionals. And
20 every day we are losing paraprofessionals. Why?
21 Because of the wage.

22 Not because they want to leave the profession.
23 They have to leave the profession. Who can live on
24 \$33,000? They cannot live in New York City, so
25 they're leaving New York City, and it's not right,

2 and we have to do something about that, and this
3 legislation will do just that. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you.

5 ANTHONY BARNES: Good evening. Did I just turn it
6 on? Is it on? So good evening. Thank you for this
7 opportunity. My name is Anthony Barnes, and I am the
8 Assistant Secretary of the UFT Paraprofessional
9 Chapter.

10 Um, almost 33 years ago, I was a
11 subparaprofessional, and the problems that I saw then
12 are still here, right? Um, imagine getting a check
13 and you still can't meet your bills. Imagine having
14 your lights turned off. Imagine being homeless. And
15 these are paraprofessionals that we talk to on a
16 daily basis as we visit schools and we meet these
17 members. And not only do we have shortages, but there
18 are paraprofessionals that are expected to do the job
19 of 2 and 3 paraprofessionals in the school, and
20 they're punished if they don't do it.

21 Um, I just thank you for this opportunity today.
Um, to raise the salary for paraprofessionals. Um,
you have a love for children. It's never a job that
you expected to be wealthy, but you do expect to be
able to take care of yourself and take care of your

2 family, to move to a better home, um, to provide
3 college tuition for your kids, you know, maybe go on
4 a vacation, you know. That's what everybody wants in
5 life.

6 Um, just thank you to consider, um, everything
7 you can to help our members Um, just thank you, thank
8 you so much. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you.

10 JOHN CAMPS: Hi, my name is John Camps. I'm a
11 representative for the paraprofessional chapter as
12 well. Um, I want to thank you, Chair Adebol, Members
13 of the Council, for having— Members of this Committee
14 for having this hearing, right?

15 As my colleague has said, we are short between
16 3,000 to 4,000 paraprofessionals. Those kids' needs
17 do not disappear. Those kids need and get the love of
18 the 1 or 2 paraprofessionals that pick up the, the
19 slack in order to make sure that those kids' day at
20 school is the best that they can have, right?

21 This is also wearing down our paraprofessionals
and causing burnout because after working 2 to 3 jobs
in the school, you are leaving to go to your second
and then your third job in order to just fight to
still be below water.

1
2 Our paraprofessionals are— came into this for the
3 right reasons, because the love of children and
4 trying to make sure that their education is— that
5 their education is taken care of, right? We need to
6 make sure that we are treating them with the grace
7 that they treat the children that they serve every
8 day, right? These are the people that get our
9 children off the buses, make sure that their diapers
10 are changed, make sure that they are fed, make sure
11 that they have a pat on the back when they're
12 struggling, that go over and over the lesson with
13 them, slow it down so that they understand what's
14 going on. Because some of our kids don't come in with
15 that clear mindset, right?

16 Their minds are going 1,000 miles an hour, and
17 our paras are able to settle it down and get them to
18 a point where they understand it. Those are the
19 moments that we hold true as a paraprofessional,
20 right? When you see a kid that struggled all year and
21 all of a sudden they get it, that joy that they get,
that's the wealth that Anthony spoke of. Right?

This bill would give them the, the respect to
show that the Council is hearing them, that this city
is hearing them, that they are an essential worker in

2 those schools and not just a punching bag that the
3 DOE or OLR might think that they are, right? They
4 represent our neighborhoods, and guess what? They
5 live in those neighborhoods where they are- where
6 they're serving and they can't afford to live there
7 anymore.

8 So we come, as OLR said, or as the Chair said, we
9 come to you guys because we didn't have any other
10 choice. We come to you to ask you for this, so that
11 we can have a pathway forward for our
12 paraprofessionals and to address the, the mass
13 vacancies that we do have. To make this job the
14 career that Para's need and that our students need.
15 Thank you very much.

16 MICHELLE HERMAN: Hi, my name is Michelle Herman.
17 I'm the Executive Advisor for Policy and Negotiations
18 at the UFC. Um, I just want to echo what everyone
19 said, and I think Chair Aldebol, you said it
20 correctly. Pattern bargaining discriminates against
21 the lowest paid workers, and I'm here to just kind of
to give a more technical, um, perspective on the
legislation before you.

Um, this was carefully crafted because we've seen
the effects of pattern bargaining over 10, 20, 30

2 years, and you see in the charts it goes like this
3 with the lowest paid and the highest paid workers. It
4 doesn't work and so we cannot work within the current
5 system to fix the issue at hand.

6 So this is why we have the carefully crafted
7 piece of legislation to address the discrimination
8 disparities caused by pattern bargaining. So thank
9 you for taking the time to, um, hear us out.

10 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you. I, I have a
11 couple of questions, but if you have questions—
12 You're the Chair, you go first. I'm gonna go first.
13 Prerogative of the Chair.

14 So, um, this question is for any, any of you. Do
15 you know how many Paraprofessionals currently rely on
16 benefits like SNAP or cash assistance and are maybe
17 eligible for Medicaid benefits?

18 PRISCILLA CASTRO: Many, many, because again,
19 \$33,000, thousands. We have 26,000 paraprofessionals.
20 So you could imagine. And some of them, as John said
21 and Anthony said, to survive, barely surviving,
calling us because they are being evicted, going into
shelters.

That's reality, that's truth, and it's just
disgraceful.

2 MICHAEL MULGREW: Every one of them, it— if they
3 are the primary, um, if they're the primary, um,
4 excuse me, if they're the primary support, financial
5 support for the household, they would qualify for
6 almost all of the services you just said. And we have
7 many paraprofessionals who are in that situation and
8 one of the issues that we— one of the most difficult
9 issues for us is the countless number of
10 paraprofessionals who are calling us who are in
11 homeless situations, who are full-time workers for
12 the City of New York.

13 But we don't— we've never done a survey to
14 collect the actual numbers, but because their salary
15 is so low, they would qualify for almost all of those
16 benefits if they are the single, again, funder for
17 the household.

18 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Um, on, on the bargaining,
19 have you explored other possible avenues to increase
20 paraprofessional pay outside of the pattern, outside
21 of the—

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: —pattern bargaining?

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yes. And, you know, I can tell
you, uh, that we were very proud that in the last two

1
2 rounds of bargaining, the negotiating Committee has
3 voted to set aside other people's raises, part- parts
4 of other people's raises for paraprofessionals
5 because we know that the gap is getting worse and
6 every time we do another round of collective
7 bargaining, that gap of using pattern bargaining as
8 the excuse, actually exacerbates it, exacerbates it.
9 But we got to the point where we're now saying we can
10 never catch up and when you bring it to the city, uh,
11 to OLR and OMB, they are constantly telling us, well,
12 you have to pay for the whole thing.

11 And I said, where does it say this? You tell me
12 where. Oh, we are pattern bargaining. I said, I know,
13 I've done the history- historical research on pattern
14 bargaining. It did not stop- start in the city of New
15 York. It started in the private industry, and they
16 had clear provisions for these types of situations.
17 So you're just ignoring that. You have chosen as a
18 city to ignore that because it's convenient for you.
19 Makes OLR's job easier in bargaining, but it also
20 means that they're doing a massive disservice to the
21 services we're supposed to be supplying the citizens,
and in our case, the children of New York City.

1
2 So I'm, you know, part of me is like, this is
3 enough is enough now, and we cannot allow them to
4 continue to hide behind a complete fabricated lie,
5 because that's all it is. You can go back and look at
6 the historical um, development of pattern bargaining.
7 It started in the auto industry across all of the
8 different manufacturers, and this was— the provisions
9 were there that this situation would not happen.

10 When they adopted it, the city adopted it, nobody
11 else. In the fiscal crisis of the '70s, they chose to
12 say, we're going to follow pattern bargaining, that
13 can keep us, uh, from going into the same situation
14 we just had. And then conveniently they started to
15 say that other workers had to pay for other workers'
16 salaries.

17 This is a complete made-up lie and a scam and a
18 scam. It's nothing but a scam on behalf of the City
19 of New York.

20 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Um, you have any questions,
21 Council Member Cabán or Narcisse? Okay.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Um, since I'm part of
23 the City of New York in some extent but what you're
24 saying, that, um, they hide behind, um, the
25 bargaining opportunity for them not taking their

2 responsibility, is not acceptable. Because like I
3 said before, the folks that we're talking about,
4 those are the folks that we need in our community. It
5 is a necessity, it's not a luxury for our children in
6 the classroom or the teachers.

7 So in your position -

8 MICHAEL MULGREW: Mm-hmm.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: What you think that we
10 should do next, Michael? I know you always have
11 ideas.

12 MICHAEL MULGREW: This is a crisis because the
13 paraprofessionals are so important to a child who has
14 great challenges, right?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Mm-hmm.

16 MICHAEL MULGREW: But these are not the only
17 low-wage workers who've been affected negatively over
18 the, uh, decades by patent bargaining. I think it's
19 time we have a reckoning, and that is and yes, you
20 are part of the City of New York, and we've come to
21 you as a check and balance on the city agencies.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: You know, that's my
line, right? Check and balance for people.

MICHAEL MULGREW: And you have two agencies, OLR
and OMB, who definitely need a check at this moment,

1
2 and they need to be pulled onto the carpet to say
3 enough is enough.

4 Um, and that really would— should be the next
5 place that it's this goes, because this should never
6 have— this should not be happening. I do not believe
7 that the majority of folks who are elected officials
8 who work for the city think it's a good idea to keep
9 driving their own workers into poverty. And— but it's
10 being driven by two agencies, OLR and OMB, and they
11 have just chosen to do that.

12 So we can say, you can't make that choice
13 anymore. You are irresponsible. You have caused
14 damage and harm to thousands and thousands of people,
15 as well as to thousands of people who are relying on
16 services. You have done that, and you're supposed to
17 be smart enough to understand the ramifications of
18 your short-sighted decisions that make your
19 day-to-day life easier as you're screwing over
20 everybody else.

21 So maybe we should go looking at— this is the
issue with putting real guardrails around OLR and
OMB. Excuse me. Sorry.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And unfortunately, I
3 don't know, say, should I say unfortunately that I'm
4 on your side on that one?

5 ANTHONY BARNES: Totally. That I, they have to be
6 responsible. There should be check and balance. And
7 like I said before, we cannot ask people to wait to
8 pay their bills. We cannot ask people to wait to eat.
9 We cannot ask people to wait to pay and especially
10 now with medical and all the things reimbursement.

11 So for those watching, who may not fully
12 understand your, you know, the role of a para, the
13 day-to-day. Who can be the best person to tell me and
14 describe? Because you have people watching and they
15 say, what's para? For them, they don't- like myself,
16 I have 4 children, so I understand.

17 So can you tell us what's the day-to-day activity
18 for para? What they do? What's their
19 responsibilities? And, um, how they carry the
20 classroom? So the day-to-day function of a
21 paraprofessional. When a paraprofessional walks into
the lunchroom, if they're assigned to a one-to-one-
and the majority of paraprofessionals are working
with a one-to-one student.

1
2 There are paras that work with a full class, but
3 the need is mostly one-to-one basis, whether it be
4 health-related, um, uh, behavior, um, they, they set
5 the tone, right? A lot of kids you know, we are the
6 love that they get, right? So when you, when you
7 greet a kid in the morning, um, you would take them
8 to class.

9 Um, we are not really responsible for breakfast,
10 but a lot of times para's are paid to come in, um,
11 and work with the kids during breakfast. So in the
12 classroom, you help them reinforce the lesson that
13 the teacher has taught. A lot of times you have to
14 differentiate because the teacher is going to to move
15 at the pace of the majority of the class. And you
16 have the paraprofessional to kind of break down the
17 lessons for the child that they're working with. And
18 a lot of times they won't get it, but, you know, we
19 find mechanisms to work with the kid to make them
20 feel, um, some accomplishments on a daily basis
21 because that's what every kid needs- reinforcement,
encouragement.

Um, we, we document behaviors, we document, um,
the good things we see, the things that are not
working so well for the kids. We do work well with

1
2 the school support teams, the psychologists, the
3 social workers, speech persons, uh, we're involved in
4 all of those actions. Um, we have, you know, the role
5 to also effectively communicate with parents.

6 Um, the teacher is in charge, but, you know, as,
7 as the person working with the kids, We- it's
8 important that we be at IEP meetings because, um,
9 again, we see a lot more from the kids a lot of times
10 than the teachers does because remember, a teacher is
11 1 person and 30 kids, right? She has to keep up with
12 the pace of the kids.

13 So again, that's why we are essential in the
14 classrooms for these kids and when these kids don't
15 get the services, they fall behind, they fall behind,
16 they fall behind. Then the behaviors start. Um,
17 suspensions start, and it could have all been avoided
18 by, you know, giving these kids the services at the
19 beginning. I don't know if anybody want to add
20 anything.

21 JOHN CAMPS: And just to piggyback off of what
Anthony says, we can be everything to the kid, the,
the children that we serve, right? We could be their
legs if they need to be- have a mobility issue,
right? With their protector to help guide them

1 through the, through the wall as they're- if they
2 have unstable on their feet. We're diabetes
3 screeners, right? We try to make sure we could- if we
4 get a kid in September that has diabetes, by the
5 first week of October you can tell if he blinks the
6 wrong way if his sugar's dropped or not, right?

7 We know everything about our children. They
8 become ours, right? We're their best friend, we're
9 their biggest support system. We are the one that
10 helped guide them through, through these lessons,
11 right? And we make sure that when those kids act up a
12 little bit or over-spirited, as we like to say,
13 right, we calm them down so that the teacher can
14 proceed, so that the other 12 or 24 children in the
15 room do not suffer because that one child is having a
16 moment that they need to take, take some time to
17 themselves, right?

18 We are, we are and can be everything to those
19 children. We're their parents when they're at school,
20 and we make sure that they are safe and sound until
21 we turn- pass them off to the, the bus matron or to
the actual parent at the house when we get them off
the bus, right?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So the para basically
3 get to know your children on the, you know, personal
4 and all aspect, and they are the one that can help
5 your children progress in the school.

6 JOHN CAMPS: Yeah.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: They are the true- they
8 are the one that listen to your children even more.

9 ANTHONY BARNES: As a lot of paras say, right, we
10 become a psychologist, a social worker, a big
11 brother, a big sister. We're it when we're with those
12 kids, and we're with them 7 out of the 8 periods of
13 the day in all of their- in all of their classes
14 besides our duty-free lunch.

15 We're the constant in their life to make sure
16 that it is. You could be- everything in your life
17 could be falling apart, but when you walk into that
18 room or into that school building, the kid knows
19 nothing but having a good day with you because that's
20 what our job is, to make sure that they come in and
21 they're protected and safe.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So I officially wanna
say thank you, even though I, I'm always regularly on
the, in the classroom. I wanna say thank you to all
the paraprofessionals, and you don't want to know my

2 dear for all the paraprofessionals, cross guard, all
3 the folks that keep the city running. And I think we
4 owe it to them, and that's not much they're asking,
5 so we're gonna do everything. As you see, my
6 colleagues have the bill and I'm here. It's just
7 like, I'm, I'm here with you because I can understand
8 what's going on and I'm here with you because the
9 backbone, the bone marrow, whatever you wanna call
10 it, that's why the paraprofessionals are in the
11 classroom. So thank you and do you believe that if we
12 do the increase the way we were supposed to, we'll
13 get more paraprofessionals?

14 JOHN CAMPS: Yeah.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. Absolutely.
16 So thank you. I can see you waiting to get— Thank
17 you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Um, so OLR did
19 testify, you know, it's simple, Michael, come on in
20 and request a meeting and they'll open everything
21 back up and we'll solve this in 1, 2, 3. How
realistic is that? And can you walk folks through
like what that actually means if the UFT were to go
and say reopen the contract? Like, you know, because

2 they're, they're painting this as a realistic
3 alternative and I don't believe that it is.

4 MICHAEL MULGREW: Every time we've approached them
5 about this issue, it has always been about how are
6 we— how are UFT members, the other UFT members, going
7 to pay for this? Could you imagine any other form of
8 business where if you can't recruit workers because
9 of the salary, you go to the other workers and say,
10 how are you gonna pay for this?

11 That's the arrogance that drives us nuts and, and
12 And the people who are charge— in charge of our
13 finances for the city, how brilliant are they that
14 they'd rather not raise the salary of a
15 paraprofessional and then let lawyers just wreak
16 havoc on the city of New York and get checks written
17 to families where we could have been hiring 2
18 paraprofessionals?

19 So this is like the gross incompetence, mass
20 stupidity and arrogance of these people, these
21 bureaucrats hiding behind this complete scam. So it's
not— it, it's not as they like it to keep it as this
simple. Hey, everybody else, you're gonna pay for it.
No, you're the employer, you pay for it, number one.

1
2 Number two, you brought— I heard you talking
3 about Carter cases. It's now at \$1.3 billion. That's
4 just Carter cases. Lawyers have already told us, they
5 say, oh, could you— we were like, stay away from our
6 system. We have more and more lawyers who are now
7 running around from school to school. Oh, do you have
8 a para? You have this? This is, as they tell us,
9 low-hanging fruit for them because they know they'll
10 get the city to write a check right away. And if you
11 ask the Department of Ed, how many paras are we
12 actually short? They can't give you an answer. They
13 know the number because they're all, they're all on
14 an IEP. Are you telling me the Department of
15 Education doesn't know exactly how many paras we
16 need? Of course they do.

17 Last year when we produced a number, within 3
18 weeks they came out with a new number to tell us we
19 were wrong. We were happy about it because it was
20 much higher. And you— this is all— this is agencies
21 working together. And honestly, there are many people
inside the Department of Ed who said, we hope you win
this fight because OLR and OMB will not listen to us.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: The other question
that I had on, on the workforce is, you know, many

2 are forced to leave the Department of Education. Do
3 we know where that workforce is going? Do we have
4 any, um, information about what happens to those
5 families?

6 PRISCILLA CASTRO: They actually leaving to do
7 other professions, more money, because they can't
8 survive with the \$33,000. They're leaving with their
9 family, literally moving out of New York City.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much for
11 all you do, for being here, and for being the impetus
12 for change. That's what we're trying to get done
13 here.

14 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you for this hearing. More
15 importantly, thank you for introducing this bill, um,
16 and we do appreciate the effort of you guys really
17 trying to fix something that is just so blatantly
18 wrong that everyone understands is wrong except for a
19 very few short- short-sighted people.

20 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you so much for your
21 testimony today. Thank you.

PANEL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Okay, when you hear your
name, please, uh, come up to the witness panel. Uh,
invite, uh, Donald Nesbitt, uh, Vice President Local

2 372, DC 37 and Emily Smith, a New York City student.
3 Thank you. I was saying is she here? Okay, okay, you
4 can start.

5 DONALD NESBIT: So good afternoon, Chair, um,
6 Aldebol uh, and fellow members of the, uh, labor com-
7 Civil Service and Labor Committee. I'm Donald Nesbit,
8 Executive Vice President for Local 372, DC 37, uh,
9 and we represent, uh, various titles within the New
10 York City Department of education, including family
11 support paraprofessionals.

12 Family support paraprofessionals is a specialized
13 role focused on bridging the gap between home and
14 school, providing advocacy and services for students
15 with high needs and this includes, uh, students that
16 are homeless within our shelter system.

17 Uh, I would like to take a moment to describe
18 some of the responsibilities of the family support
19 paraprofessional. Parent outreach, consent in home
20 visits for students with attendance issues. They
21 initiate contact with the parents and guardians to
explain the evaluation process and, and obtain
consent for student assessments. Record collection
and documentation. Family support paraprofessionals
secure and maintain appropriate records and

1 documentation required for students, um, evaluations,
2 IEP meeting coordination. They schedule and send
3 notices to parents and guardians regarding their
4 upcoming IEP meetings. Communication and special
5 education services, they provide information to
6 families about services, um, that they may be
7 eligible for, including students with IEPs.

8 Uh, parent communication and support, they
9 provide, uh, external agency communication. They
10 respond to inquiries and requests for information
11 from hospitals, ACS, etc. IEP meetings, reminders
12 when these meetings are coming up. They also remind
13 families of this coordination with, with school
14 staff. They work with the school assessment team,
15 teachers, administrators, and service providers for
16 our students and perform any other duties. Parent
17 coordinators are also- I mean, uh, paraprofessionals
18 are also in high demand, ah, yet there are severe
19 shortages throughout the school system.

20 Many children and families rely on
21 paraprofessionals to navigate the complicated system
of the the Department of Education as well as other
city agencies. They- we love working with, with
students with high needs and families, uh, yet they

2 are, they are underpaid and many find second and
3 third jobs in order to make ends meet.

4 The average salary for a family support
5 paraprofessional is \$18 to \$28 an hour. These workers
6 are not getting rich, um, by doing this work, but
7 they stay because they care and they're dedicated to
8 the students they serve. Without- with the cost of
9 living constantly on the rise, it is getting harder
and harder. As a result, many paraprofessionals leave
because they just can't afford to stay.

10 The annual- this annual lump sum, uh, that's in
11 the bill, a payment of \$10,000 added to
12 paraprofessional salary, will help in addressing the
13 high turnover, uh, rate and may assist in recruitment
and retention as well.

14 Uh, we believe that Intro 692, uh, if passed and
15 signed into law, um, by the Mayor, uh, for UFT
16 paraprofessionals should include family support
17 paraprofessionals represented by Local 372, DC 37.
Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you so much. Does
19 anybody have any- do you have any questions for Mr.
20 Nesbit? Okay, so, um, I, I do have one question, and
21 I'll ask the, the same question that I asked of, um,

2 Uh, President Mulgrew, um, so have you, um, have you
3 approached OLR or the city, um, to try to rectify
4 this pay disparity among paraprofessionals?

5 DONALD NESBIT: So we, in, in, uh, collective
6 bargaining discussions, we have tried to add, um, in,
7 in an affordability crisis, we have spoken to them
8 about, um, ensuring that some of of the low-wage
9 employees within our city are definitely taken care
10 of through this process.

11 It doesn't address everything. We've included,
12 uh, things in the last collective bargaining
13 agreement like, ah, childcare payments for childcare
14 and things to try to relieve them of some of their
15 bills and necessities that they have. However, the
16 pay just doesn't add up to the work.

17 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Okay, thank you.

18 DONALD NESBIT: And can I just say one thing?

19 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Uh, of course. I just wanna
20 add, you know, as we think of what Dr. King was
21 fighting for when Dr. King, uh, was, was killed, uh,
while, while supporting sanitation workers, it was
for fair wages, it was for equitable pensions. And
yet in 2026, we look at situations where folks can't
afford to live and I will just echo what President

2 Mulgrew has said. We too get phone calls from our
3 members who are saying they're servicing families in
4 shelters, but they too are in shelters.

5 No worker that works in New York City and
6 services others should be in the same situations and
7 just want to echo the words of President Mulgrew.

8 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: I, I just want to follow up
9 on that. So people that are leaving the
10 paraprofessional profession, uh, do you know where
11 they're going?

12 DONALD NESBIT: So at this point, we, we get phone
13 calls sometimes. Some of our other titles, uh, where
14 they're making more money, they move on to other
15 titles. It just leaves more of a shortage. It solves
16 the problem somewhere else but leaves more of a
17 shortage there. Uh, you— we get, uh, we hear where
18 the private industry has now moved towards, you know,
19 the same rates for workers, the \$18 an hour or more,
20 and they included some things.

21 So workers actually leave to go, uh, and work
other places. They, they're just trying to find
solutions for themselves, because unfortunately it
hasn't been solved, um, through this process.

2 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you so much for your
3 testimony. Um, uh, thank you all for, uh, coming here
4 today and sharing your thoughts and experiences.

5 Um, if anyone in the Chamber, uh, wishes to speak
6 but has not had an opportunity, please raise your
7 hand and fill out the appearance card with the
8 Sergeant-at-Arms in the back of the room.

9 Okay, seeing no hands in the Chamber, I will now,
10 uh, shift to Zoom where we have, uh, Julian Morales
11 on Zoom.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Is he— I don't think he's—
14 is he unmuted? He's still muted. Can I, um, sorry,
15 technical difficulties. And he's still muted.

16 JULIAN MORALES: So everyone can hear me okay?

17 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Yep, now we can hear you.
18 Thank you, thank you for joining us today.

19 JULIAN MORALES: Sure, thank you for having me.
20 Um, good afternoon. Does the time start now? Sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Yep, time is starting now.
Yep.

JULIAN MORALES: Great. Um, good afternoon, Chair
Aldebol, Council Member De La Rosa, Speaker Menin,
and Members of the Council. My name is Julian

2 Morales, and I'm here today in my most important role
3 as a parent in strong support of Intro 692, the
4 Respect Act.

5 My daughter Charlotte was diagnosed with autism
6 at the age of 2. She's nonverbal but communicates
7 volumes through her bond with her paraprofessional,
8 Tara Lawson.

9 Tara has been far more than classroom support.
10 She has been Charlotte's stability, her advocate, and
11 often her voice. Before entering the public school
12 system, Charlotte attended a private education
13 program where she received extensive services and had
14 the same teachers and assistants for 2 years. When
15 she transitioned to public school in September 2024,
16 everything changed. New building, new teachers, new
17 routine. Um, the one constant was Tara.

18 Despite Charlotte having 3 different teachers
19 that year, Tara stayed by her side, she learned
20 Charlotte's cues, helped her regulate, and create the
21 conditions for her to feel safe and learn.

22 Last September, when Charlotte started first
23 grade without Tara, the impact was immediate and
24 devastating. Um, come here. Sorry, one second. She
25 stopped sleeping, stopped eating, and resisted going

1
2 to school. Her anxiety was overwhelming. My partner
3 and I— it's okay, Mama. My, my partner and I pushed
4 the Administration relentlessly to reunite her with
5 Tara.

6 After 6 long weeks, they finally put them two
7 back together. Um, the change was instant. Charlotte
8 smiled again. She felt secure again. She could learn
9 again. Tara didn't just show up for our daughter. She
10 wrote a children's book, like, by Tara and me.

11 Um, I'll just— I'm sorry, I'll be quick. I would
12 love the Council to pass this legislation, uh, and
13 I'll do anything to, to help that, to push the
14 Speaker and also Mayor Mamdani to make sure this
15 happens, but also that the UFT make sure that they
16 take care of their colleagues for the long haul.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you.

19 JULIAN MORALES: And I'll be submitting formal
20 written testimony.

21 CHAIRPERSON ALDEBOL: Thank you. Um, if you're
currently on Zoom and wish to speak but have not had
the opportunity to do so, please use the raise your
hand function and our staff will unmute you.

1
2 Hmm, no hands? Seeing no hands. I would like to
3 note that everyone can submit written testimony to
4 testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this
5 hearing.

6 Uh, we thank the Administration and the public
7 for attending this hearing to share their thoughts on
8 the legislation. We look forward to following up on
9 these issues. The hearing is now adjourned. [GAVEL]
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 22, 2026