

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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September 13, 2024

Start: 9:09 a.m.

Recess: 6:08 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Lynn C. Schulman  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joann Ariola  
Carmen N. De La Rosa  
Oswald Feliz  
James F. Gennaro  
Kristy Marmorato  
Julie Menin  
Mercedes Narcisse  
Kalman Yeger  
Susan Zhuang

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

Alexander Silver  
Director of Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare

Risa Weinstock  
CEO Animal Care Centers of NYC

Corinne Schiff  
Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Health at  
DOHMH

Michelle Villagomez  
ASPCA

Delores DeFerrari  
ASPCA

Matt Goldweber  
ASPCA

Rena LaFaille  
ASPCA

Lucy Jatton  
ASPCA

LaCheryl Ball  
Flatbush Vet

Natara Loose  
Neighborhood Vet

Matt Miller  
Muddy Paws Rescue

Rachael Ziering  
Muddy Paws Rescue

Justin DeSolda  
Astoria Animal Shelter

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

Allie Taylor  
YFAR

Will Zweigart  
Flatbush Cats

Isabel Kle

Heidi Systo

Hydia Cohen  
Bronx Dog Haven

Stewart Mitchell  
VFAR

Samantha Knox  
Itty Bitty City Kitties

Tanya Copeland  
Bronx Community Cats

Libby Post  
NYSAPF

Sassee Walker

Anamaria Scuric  
Astoria Cat Rescue

Victoria Koulouris  
LIC Feral Feeders

Jennifer Brooks  
Second Chance Rescue

Anne Levin  
Brooklyn Cat Café

Joan Silaco

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

Jannatul Ahmed  
LIC Feral Feeders

Kathy Nazzari  
Lights Out Coalition

Marlan Roberts  
Best Friends Animal Society NYC Life Saving  
Center

David McClure  
10 Lives Rescue

Sarah Borok  
City Vet on behalf of Andrew Kaplan

Rio Polody  
VFAR

Edita Birnkrant  
NYCLASS

Sara Lewkowicz  
10 Lives Rescue

Jonlyn Freeman  
NYC Cat Rescuer Alliance

Farrah Gopp  
10 Lives Rescue

Marie Mundaca  
Kitty King

Manuela Senatore

Ilene Richman

Courtney Chandel  
Little Wanderers

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

Dana Jacobs

Molly Caldwell  
NYC Cat Rescue Alliance

Rachel Poussan

Megan Salerno  
Waggy Tail Rescue

Patrice Miller

Ashley Carter

Michelle Marwitz

Lisa Laberdey

Osi Kaminer  
Community Board 12

Betty Arce  
Bronx Tails Cat Rescue

Julia Rosman  
Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition

Elizabeth Champ  
Brooklyn Fat Cats

Elizabeth Powers  
Positive Tails

Erica Kubersky  
Positive Tails

Christina Liew

Porsche Jones

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

Meagan Licari  
Puppy Kitty New York City

Becky Wisdom  
Greenpoint Cats

April Lang  
Kitty Kind

Cindy Stutts  
Bunnies and Beyond

Chloe Rein  
Brooklyn Kitty Committee

Emily Olive Petit  
Harlem Animal Rescue

Esther Ragelson

Erin Hendry  
Ollie's Place

Margaret Lee

Tony Poon

Jennifer Rhein  
Animals Inc.

Mike Phillips  
Urban Cat League

Laura Leopardo

Linda Mann

Deborah Thomas

Deserie Matos  
Keep Me Warm Dog Houses Inc

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

Bonnie Behrend

Natasha Reznik

Dana Jacobs  
Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network

Dana Hice  
Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network

Maddy Samaddar-Johnson  
Park Slope Cats

Roberto Bonelli  
The Animals Battalion

Marilyn Zucker

Daniel Teachout

India Mazzaro  
Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition

Aleksandra Slomska  
Trapper Aid

Lili Komitsky  
Trapper Aid

Frania Shelley-Grielen

Debra Kalish  
ACC Manhattan

Candice Kumai  
NYC ACC

Laura MacAvoy  
Puppy Kitty New York City

Sheila Sanchez

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

Helene Hartman Kutnovsky  
Community Board Seven

Sarah Hauser

Christine Kenneally

Nora Marino  
Legal Action Network for Animals

Leslie Ramos

Maggie Schnayerson  
Bay Ridge Kittens

Roxanne Delgado  
Bronx Animal Rights Electors

Marilyn Galfin  
Voices for Shelter Animals

Anne Margaret Daniel

Caitlin Kelly  
Animal Legal Defense Fund

Teresa Noto  
Bronx Tails

Steven Gruber  
Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals

Lynda Naclerio

Evril Caesar-Mason

Sarai Garcia  
Fins and Fur Aquatic Animal Micro Sanctuary

Jeanny Hernandez



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

Arina Hinzen



1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Please do not  
3 approach the dais, and please, let's be respectful to  
4 each other as the hearing go along. If you have any  
5 questions, please raise your hand and one of us  
6 Sergeant at Arms will kindly assist you. Thank you  
7 very much for your kind cooperation. Chair, we are  
8 ready to begin.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. [gavel]  
10 Good morning everyone. My name is Lynn Schulman,  
11 Chair of the New York City Council's Committee on  
12 Health. Before we start, I want to dedicate today's  
13 hearing to former Council Member Paul Vallone who  
14 unexpectedly passed away earlier this year, and who  
15 was an especially devoted animal advocate. I want to  
16 thank everyone for joining us at today's important  
17 and long-overdue hearing on the state of animal  
18 rescue in New York City. We will also be hearing  
19 Introduction 1018 sponsored by Council Member Brannan  
20 and myself which would implement the state's  
21 prohibition of the sale of cats and dogs in retail  
22 pet shops and require that any person who sells  
23 animal to the public in their ordinary course of  
24 business receive a permit to do so from the City's  
25 Health Department. Before we begin, I would like to

1  
2 note that we are joined by Council Member Zhuang,  
3 Marmorato, Ariola, and of course, Council Member  
4 Brannan. Today, we will be discussing the current  
5 state of animal rescue in New York City. Animal  
6 welfare is a fundamental aspect of our community's  
7 health and compassion, and at this hearing we will be  
8 examining how the City is meeting these  
9 responsibilities. We will hear testimony from the  
10 Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare, the Animal Care  
11 Centers of New York City, also known as ACC, the  
12 Health Department and the many animal welfare and  
13 rescue organizations, individual rescuers and animal  
14 advocates in the City who have dedicated their life  
15 to this work. I also want to thank the ASPCA for the  
16 incredible work they do to help our city's animals  
17 and pet owners. And by the way, the ASPCA is outside  
18 City Hall today showcasing some wonderful animals  
19 they have up for adoption. So please stop by if you  
20 can. I believe they're here until noon today. As  
21 Chair of the Health Committee, I am committed to  
22 making sure that the City is providing enough  
23 resource and support to address this issue, and we  
24 will use this hearing as an opportunity to explore  
25 ideas for potential legislation and identify

1 actionable steps to take to enhance these efforts.

2 Over the past two years, New York City reached an  
3 alarmingly high rate of pet surrenders following the  
4 surge in adoptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. At  
5 the same time, the number of adoptions from ACC and  
6 other organizations has largely decreased. In 2018,  
7 about 700 dogs were adopted per quarter from ACC  
8 shelters and in 2020 that number dropped to 180. In  
9 the first quarter of 2024, there were a little over  
10 300 dog adoptions from ACC which is not even half the  
11 pre-pandemic rate. During that same period, ACC took  
12 in about 7,500 animals, a 33 percent increase from  
13 2021. ACC has been a critical player in managing  
14 animal intake, providing shelter and working to find  
15 homes for our city's animals in need, but their  
16 facilities and staff are being stretched far beyond  
17 their capacity. We must understand both ACC's  
18 successes and the challenges they face to ensure that  
19 every animal receives the care that they deserve  
20 which includes determining whether sufficient funding  
21 and resources are being allocated to them. ACC is not  
22 the only organization doing this valuable work. I  
23 want to thank the numerous rescue organizations and  
24 independent rescuers throughout the City who dedicate  
25

1 their time and resources to this issue, including the  
2 organizations that I have visited over the past few  
3 weeks. It is vital that we recognize all their  
4 invaluable contributions and explore how the City and  
5 ACC can support them better. This is especially true  
6 for those who volunteer their time and energy to  
7 helping the half a million feral cats estimated to be  
8 living on the streets and in feral cat colonies  
9 around the City. These rescuers face substantial  
10 challenges. They lack adequate resources, funding,  
11 and most critically access to low-cost and high-  
12 volume spay and neuter services which is very  
13 necessary to make a meaningful impact on stabilizing  
14 the feral cat population. New York City stands in  
15 contrast to other cities and states in the United  
16 States who have devoted significant funding to  
17 government programs that provide access to low-cost  
18 spay and neuter procedures for both pet owners and  
19 rescuers. Access to low-cost and affordable  
20 veterinarian care is one of the main drivers of pet  
21 surrenders and the decline in adoption rates  
22 nationwide and in New York City. According to the  
23 New York Times, the cost of veterinarian care in the  
24 United States has increased by 60 percent over the  
25

1 past 10 years, outpacing inflation. This is due to  
2 various factors such as an increasing shortage of  
3 veterinarians and technicians. A national survey  
4 showed that about one-third of pet owners report  
5 avoiding going to the vet due to financial  
6 constraints, and according to Forbes, New York City  
7 ranks number six among the most expensive cities to  
8 own a dog. This is not acceptable. Another  
9 increasingly prevalent problem is people surrendering  
10 their pets due to housing challenges. In New York  
11 City it is becoming harder to afford housing and find  
12 housing that allows or is suitable for pets. When  
13 tenants move to new rental properties with strict pet  
14 regulations, they often face the heartbreaking choice  
15 of whether to give up their beloved pets, a choice  
16 that no one should have to make. According to the  
17 organization, Voters for Animal Rights, New York  
18 City's spending per capita on animal welfare is far  
19 lower than the amount spent by cities such as Miami,  
20 Dallas, and Los Angeles. New York City has a long  
21 history of being a national leader in the  
22 implementation of innovative policies. We need to  
23 ensure that City resources are being adequately  
24 provided as well as funded, but we must also address  
25

1  
2 the root causes of these issues, and not simply put a  
3 bandage on a deep wound and hope for the best. In  
4 conclusion, I would like to thank the members of the  
5 Administration who are present today as well as ACC  
6 and all of the organizations and animal advocates who  
7 are here to make their voices heard. We appreciate  
8 your time, but kindly request that members of the  
9 public be patient and adhere to their allotted  
10 testimony time so that everyone has an equal  
11 opportunity to testify. I would also like to thank  
12 my staff and the Health Committee staff for their  
13 work on this hearing. I will now turn it over to  
14 Council Member Brannan to make a statement on his  
15 bill Intro 1018. Council Member Brannan?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair  
17 Schulman. I thank you for convening this very  
18 important and long-overdue hearing, and I appreciate  
19 you hearing my bill today. They say that a moral  
20 progress of a society can be judged by the way its  
21 animals are treated, and I think we're here today  
22 because we can all agree that the greatest city in  
23 the world needs to do a much better job at being the  
24 most humane city in the world. And I have been an  
25 animal welfare advocate since I was 13 years old.



1  
2 I'm now one of 51 law makers in the City of New York  
3 and in position to do something about it. I'm often  
4 the first to defend the fiery passion of animal  
5 activists when others assume that there's some sort  
6 of ulterior motivation. There is no ulterior  
7 motivation. We just all really, really care about  
8 animals and we want to get this right. And not just  
9 only my bill, but on the hearing today that Chair  
10 Schulman has convened us for, I think, you know, the  
11 Mayor talks a lot about going upstream. Instead of  
12 waiting to pull people out of the river, we should up  
13 stream to find out why people are falling into the  
14 river, and I think we can do the same when it comes  
15 to animal welfare in this city. And the fact that,  
16 as Chair Schulman mentioned that so much of our  
17 overcrowded shelters are due to the lack of  
18 veterinary care and the lack of subsidized TNR  
19 resources, and I am worried that the City of New York  
20 right now is taking advantage of, if not exploiting  
21 the compassion of animal lovers. We all care very  
22 much about animals, and we're always going to do  
23 everything we possibly can for animals, even if it  
24 comes down to spending our last time, we're going to  
25 use it to buy cat food for our feral cat colonies,

1  
2 but the City should be helping and subsidizing these  
3 actions. So, but the bill that we're hearing today  
4 has been a very long time coming, working with our  
5 partners, in Albany as well, to prevent the sale of  
6 cats and dogs in retail settings. I am the only  
7 every adopted and had adopted pit bulls and now I  
8 have an adopted racing greyhound, and adopting an  
9 animal is-- you save two lives. You save your own,  
10 and you save the life of that animal. So with  
11 pushing this bill today and with all the issues that  
12 I think will help aerate today, this is going to be  
13 an important hearing, and I want to thank Chair  
14 Schulman for putting it together, for hearing my  
15 bill, and most of all for the Administration for  
16 being here, but for all of you for being here today  
17 with us, and doing everything we can to make this a  
18 more humane city. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

19 [applause]

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you, Council  
21 Member Brannan. I will now turn the mic to the  
22 Committee Counsel to administer the oath to the  
23 Administration.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Morning, Chris Pepe,  
25 Committee Counsel. If you could all please raise your

1  
2 right hand. Now, in accordance with the rules of the  
3 Council I will administer the affirmation to the  
4 witnesses from the Mayoral Administration. Do you  
5 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing  
6 but the truth in your testimony before this committee  
7 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?  
8 Director Silver? Ms. Weinstock? And Deputy  
9 Commissioner Schiff? Okay, you may proceed with your  
10 testimony. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Before you start,  
12 I just want to tell people there's really no clapping  
13 in the chambers. You can go like this if you agree  
14 with something. Thank you very much, and if we can  
15 keep it down so that we can get through everything.  
16 I appreciate it. I appreciate everybody being here.  
17 Thank you. I'm sorry.

18 DIRECTOR SILVER: Thank you. Good  
19 morning Chair Schulman, Council Member Brannan, and  
20 members of the Health Committee. My name is  
21 Alexandra Silver, and I have the honor of serving as  
22 Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare.  
23 I'm joined by Risa Weinstock, President and CEO of  
24 Animal Care Centers of New York City, ACC, and  
25 Corrine Schiff, Deputy Commissioner for the Division

1  
2 of Environmental Health at the Department of Health  
3 and Mental Hygiene, both of whom will also offer  
4 testimony. I am grateful to the City Council for  
5 recognizing that animal rescue is a significant  
6 subject worthy of government's attention, and I thank  
7 you for the opportunity to speak today. New York  
8 City has had an animal welfare liaison in the Mayor's  
9 Office since 2015, and since 2020, the first Mayoral  
10 Office of Animal Welfare in the country. By creating  
11 this dedicated entity-- and I thank Council Member  
12 Brannan for his bill calling for it and the Council  
13 for their support, we have elevated animal welfare  
14 considerations in city government and can stand as a  
15 model for other municipalities. There's much  
16 potential for growth, but I am heartened by this  
17 offices' ability to connect with agencies across the  
18 city on a wide variety of issues effecting animals,  
19 and by extension, effecting people. The wellbeing of  
20 animals does not exist in a vacuum. It is both  
21 impacted by and impacts many factors, and it is  
22 linked with the wellbeing of people. Animal  
23 shelters, rescue groups, and individual rescuers in  
24 New York City and across the country are experiencing  
25 challenges that reflect broader issues. When we talk

1  
2 about animal rescue, we are talking about financial  
3 pressures and housing challenges facing animal  
4 guardians. We are talking about veterinary workforce  
5 shortages and lack of access to resources for people  
6 with pets. As liaison for the City regarding animal  
7 welfare needs and concerns, I hear from and speak  
8 frequently with New Yorkers directly involved in  
9 animal rescue. We are fortunate in New York City to  
10 have many wonderful nonprofit organizations and  
11 compassionate individuals committed to helping both  
12 animals and the people who love them. One of those  
13 organizations is Animal Care Centers of New York  
14 City, which is contracted by the New York City Health  
15 Department to operate our city's open-admissions  
16 animal shelters, and which also partners with an  
17 impressive network of other animal welfare  
18 organizations. As I stated the last time I appeared  
19 before this committee and I wholeheartedly reiterate  
20 now, the Adams Administration appreciates the hard  
21 work and dedication of ACC staff. It is essential  
22 that we continue to support ACC and all New Yorkers  
23 can join in their mission of ending animal  
24 homelessness by adopting, fostering, volunteering and  
25 encouraging others to do so. This Administration is

1 committed to helping get that message out, sharing  
2 information about adoption and fostering  
3 opportunities in newsletters and social media  
4 including dogs available for adoption from ACC  
5 partners at press events, and facilitating  
6 opportunities for ACC to conduct outreach. Mayor  
7 Adams has hosted and participated in Kitty Hall and  
8 City Howl adoption events at City Hall, joined in the  
9 opening of the new Staten Island animal care center,  
10 and filmed videos to help promote the importance of  
11 adopting, fostering, and volunteering. In our recent  
12 Summer of Possibility Campaign, highlighting various  
13 activities and resources, we included adopting a pet  
14 with a campaign landing page linking to ACC's  
15 website. Adopting a dog, cat, rabbit, or guinea pig  
16 from an ACC shelter is now something that Queens  
17 residents are at long last able to do in their own  
18 borough, along with looking for their lost pets.  
19 Earlier this week, we celebrated the opening of the  
20 Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal Care Center, the first  
21 full-service animal shelter in Queens. It was  
22 wonderful to see Chair Schulman there, and we thank  
23 the Council for all they did to make this center a  
24 reality. I know I am far from alone in wishing that  
25

1  
2 former Council Member Vallone whose compassion for  
3 and advocacy on behalf of animals was an inspiration,  
4 that he could have stood with us to cut the ribbon.

5 Those of us who are familiar with the older center  
6 built in and for another century can most appreciate  
7 the progress this new facility reflects. On a recent  
8 visit, I almost jumped for joy when I saw a sign by a  
9 room in the Medical Department that said "dentistry."

10 People who work and volunteer at ACC and in animal  
11 rescue understand why this is so exciting. I am  
12 thrilled by the rooms accommodating multiple cats,  
13 enabling them to socialize and explore, and the  
14 retractable sky light over many of the dog kennels  
15 allowing for light and fresh air. We are aware of  
16 some recent concerns regarding conditions at the new  
17 center, but it is truly a remarkable, beautiful  
18 building that will make for a better animal, adopter,  
19 pet owner, employee, and volunteer experience.

20 Meanwhile, the New York City Department of Design and  
21 Construction is managing ACC capital projects at  
22 three other sites. Construction of a new full-  
23 service Bronx animal care center is moving along, and  
24 as with the Queens center, when it is complete it  
25 will bring an essential community resource to a

1  
2 previously underserved borough. The Brooklyn animal  
3 care center is undergoing a total renovation, and the  
4 new Manhattan pet adoption center is anticipated to  
5 open this fall. We mark the opening of the current  
6 Staten Island animal care center in 2022. In coming  
7 years, we will have full-service animal shelters in  
8 every borough and welcoming facilities that will  
9 vastly improve the adoption experience, encouraging  
10 more New Yorkers to play a part in animal rescue.  
11 This is an essential component to ensuring the safety  
12 and welfare of companion animals in New York City.  
13 But as stated earlier, animal rescue is part of a  
14 larger ecosystem, and in addition to improve  
15 facilities and promoting pet adoption and fostering,  
16 we must do what we can to prevent animals from  
17 needing shelter and rescue in the first place.  
18 Leaders in the animal sheltering field across the  
19 country are emphasizing keeping pets and people  
20 together, thereby reducing shelter intake. Doing so  
21 means helping animal guardians access resources and  
22 doing our best to adjust policies so that they  
23 reflect our understanding that pets are family.  
24 Mayor Adams' two appointees to ACC's Board of  
25 Directors have each demonstrated a deep commitment to



1 helping people and pets stay together. prior to  
2 focusing on such efforts in her current position with  
3 the Humane Society of the United States, Aleah  
4 Simpson helped build ACC's Surrender Prevention  
5 program. Christine Kim who was the first director of  
6 the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare is the founder  
7 of My Dog is My Home, a national nonprofit  
8 organization that highlights and helps preserve the  
9 bonds between people experiencing homelessness and  
10 their companion animals. We marked a milestone in  
11 New York City just this spring when the Department of  
12 Homeless Services joined with the nonprofit Urban  
13 Resource Institute, URI, to launch a pet-inclusive  
14 pilot program at a shelter for families experiencing  
15 homelessness ensuring their four-legged family  
16 members can be kept with them. URI has led the way  
17 in keeping families together with their people and  
18 animals living safely housed program at many of their  
19 shelters for survivors of domestic violence. Also,  
20 this year, the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare  
21 joined the newly-created Tenant Protection Cabinet  
22 which aims to better serve tenants by creating  
23 pathways to renter-focused programs and services and  
24 to ensure safe and fair housing conditions. Our  
25

1 office was eager to take part in such a cabinet since  
2 housing related challenges are a major contributor to  
3 the high population that animal shelters across the  
4 country are experiencing. One of the initiatives  
5 that the cabinet is working on is a flyer to raise  
6 awareness specifically about protections for tenants  
7 with pets and assistance animals. The Office of  
8 Animal Welfare is also exploring ways to make housing  
9 more pet-inclusive, more accessible to people with  
10 pets of all sizes, for example, to begin with. Doing  
11 so would not only enable more animals to stay with  
12 their families who already love them, but also widen  
13 the pool of potential adopters. Efforts to keep pets  
14 and people together can also help address New York  
15 City's overpopulation of outdoor cats without owners,  
16 as it is likely that some of those community cats  
17 would have remained inside if families had access to  
18 resources to care for them. Among the places  
19 community cats call home, our New York City Housing  
20 Authority, NYCHA, developments across the five  
21 boroughs. At the end of last year, NYCHA awarded a  
22 contract to a leading New York City cat rescue  
23 organization to provide Trap Neuter Release, also  
24 known as Trap Neuter Return, or TNR, services to help  
25

1 manage this population. This is an important step.  
2  
3 As noted in our 2023 annual report, addressing street  
4 cat overpopulation requires a multifaceted approach,  
5 and it is essential that New Yorkers who have cats  
6 get them spayed or neutered and not let them roam  
7 outside. We recognize that affordable spay/neuter  
8 resources in New York City for both owned and  
9 community cats are limited, and we continue to  
10 explore ways to improve accessibility. Access to  
11 affordable veterinary care in general, not just  
12 spay/neuter is also very much on our radar. This is  
13 a challenge for animal guardians, rescuers and  
14 shelters across the country as we face not just high  
15 cost of care, but a veterinary workforce shortage as  
16 well. City funding for the new Queens ACC includes  
17 more than one million dollars for a veterinary clinic  
18 that will serve pet owner who but for assistance with  
19 veterinary care would have to relinquish their animal  
20 to ACC. Such a clinic is another significant step.  
21 We have connected with those who run existing  
22 nonprofit clinics for companion animals, veterinary  
23 practitioners, La Guardia Community College  
24 Veterinary Technician program and others invested in  
25 access to care, and we will continue to engage on

1 this. Earlier this year, Mayor Adams met with a Long  
2 Island University College of Veterinary Medicine  
3 student who had been awarded a scholarship designed  
4 to enhance diversity within the veterinary  
5 profession. This scholarship, facilitated by the  
6 Administration, was made possible through the efforts  
7 of the Brady Hunter Foundation and Harlem League.  
8 Ultimately, helping more animals means helping one  
9 another and coming together as a community to address  
10 several long-standing and deeply-rooted issues. We  
11 plan to sponsor capacity building workshops and  
12 trainings tailored to animal rescue organizations to  
13 learn more about opportunities for securing city  
14 funding as well as to explore existing avenues for  
15 public funding. The office has also encouraged and  
16 will continue to encourage nonprofit organizations  
17 involved in animal rescue to register and share  
18 foster and other volunteer opportunities on the NYC  
19 service website. Organizations can also post in-kind  
20 donation wish lists on the platform where we are  
21 eager to see more animal welfare organizations  
22 represented. Circling back to the role pet adoption  
23 plays in animal rescue. Animals, rescuers, and  
24 shelters would benefit greatly if more people chose  
25

1  
2 to adopt. We expect and are hopeful that the  
3 significant New York State legislation prohibiting  
4 the sale of dogs and cats in retail pet stores which  
5 takes effect this December will contribute to  
6 increased adoptions. We are interested in learning  
7 more about the Council legislation currently under  
8 consideration, Introduction 1018 which also addresses  
9 the sale of animals, and look forward to discussing  
10 details of this bill further with you. Thank you for  
11 your attention and support in addressing animal  
12 welfare. We look forward to your questions and  
13 continuing our collaboration to improve the lives of  
14 animals across New York City. I will now turn it  
15 over to Risa Weinstock of ACC.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Please go ahead.  
17 Before you do that, I want to just acknowledge we've  
18 been joined by Council Member Holden.

19 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Good morning,  
20 Chairperson Schulman, members of the Health  
21 Committee, and City Council. My name is Risa  
22 Weinstock, and I am the President and CEO of Animal  
23 Care Centers of New York City. Thank you for the  
24 opportunity to testify today. I'd like to thank City  
25 Council, the Administration, and the Department of

1 Health and Mental Hygiene for the commitment to ACC  
2 and the health and welfare of New York City's shelter  
3 animals with the addition of new full-service care  
4 centers in Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island, and  
5 a complete renovation of the Brooklyn shelter and the  
6 addition of a pet adoption center in Manhattan. With  
7 the substantial support and support from the private  
8 sector, ACC continues to grow as a national leader  
9 for open admission animal shelters. Established in  
10 1995 as a 501C3 not-for-profit organization, ACC has  
11 been dedicated to rescuing, caring for, and finding  
12 homes for New York City's homeless and abandoned  
13 animals for almost 30 years. Over the last decade,  
14 we have expanded our services beyond the four walls  
15 of the shelter and into the community, identifying  
16 root causes for animal surrender or abandonment, and  
17 targeting community needs rooted in surrender  
18 prevention and preserving the human/animal bond. Our  
19 services in our care centers and in the community are  
20 the foundation of our mission to end animal  
21 homelessness in New York City. ACC is unique among  
22 all other animal welfare organizations in the City in  
23 that we are the only open admissions organization.  
24 Under our contract with the City and the Health  
25

1 Department, ACC accepts every animal brought to us,  
2 whether the animal has been abandoned, surrendered,  
3 or found as a stray. Since January of this year, ACC  
4 has taken in over 13,000 animals. To-date, with the  
5 combination of our adoption program and a robust  
6 partnership with over 300 rescue groups in our New  
7 Hope program, ACC has been able to place 91 percent  
8 of cats, dogs, rabbits, and guinea pigs that have  
9 come through our doors. Animal shelters nationally  
10 are navigating many post-COVID challenges that are  
11 dramatically and negatively impacting animal welfare.  
12 Adoption alone will not solve these issues or  
13 alleviate the strain on our shelters. Community  
14 support and collaboration with the common goal of  
15 achieving the best outcomes for the most animals is  
16 necessary. No one organization can fix what is  
17 happening, but all of us working together can  
18 certainly lead to a stronger state of animal welfare  
19 in New York City. The two main drivers of animal  
20 intake at ACC are owner surrender and stray animals.  
21 The common thread to these intakes is financial  
22 hardship, job losses, housing instability, pet  
23 restrictions in housing, rising cost of basic pet  
24 care, pet food and veterinary services. We have  
25

1  
2 dedicated significant resources to provide social  
3 services to assist thousands of pet owners in  
4 successfully keeping their pets. Yet, other  
5 constraints like pet restrictions in rental homes and  
6 apartments and pet fees on top of an increasingly  
7 unaffordable rental market, and the rising cost of  
8 veterinary care leave our clients with no option but  
9 surrender. These are not issues that ACC can solve  
10 alone. There's also been an uptick in stray animals  
11 brought to ACC. These are the hardest to place  
12 animals because we have no access to important  
13 information like their temperament, their behavior,  
14 or any latent health issues. As we take in more  
15 stray cats and dogs, the amount of time spent in our  
16 care center also increases. That is because so many  
17 of these animals we take in are not spayed and  
18 neutered, and by law, ACC must sterilize cats and  
19 dogs before releasing them to adopters or rescuers.  
20 While there was a significant increase in pet  
21 adoptions during the height of the pandemic when many  
22 people were spending more time at home, the national  
23 trend as well as in New York City was that the rate  
24 of adoption is declining. As people return to more  
25 regular work away from home and their social



1 routines, fewer individuals are looking to adopt pets  
2 leading to longer stays for animals in shelters. For  
3 the same reasons that lead to surrender, the rising  
4 cost of pet care in a crisis of affordability of  
5 housing and daily goods have all added to lower  
6 adoption rates. There's also a very critical  
7 nationwide shortage of veterinarians and veterinary  
8 technicians. Affordability and availability of care  
9 have resulted in many pets going untreated for basic  
10 wellness issues to more serious conditions. At ACC  
11 many of our clients cannot afford care. This is  
12 specifically why our surrender prevention program was  
13 implemented. We offer an array of resources  
14 including a pet food pantry, counseling, free and  
15 local vaccine clinic, vouchers for free or low-cost  
16 spay/neuter and medical services. With the addition  
17 of two clinics as part of our shelters in Queens and  
18 the Bronx, we will be able to increase pet retention  
19 by offering access to low-cost veterinary services to  
20 our clients who may need to surrender their pet  
21 because of an inability to pay for needed veterinary  
22 care. Even with these challenges that I've outlined,  
23 ACC remains optimistic about our future and the  
24 potential to better serve the homeless and abandoned  
25

1 animals of New York City. Earlier this week we  
2 officially opened the Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal  
3 Care Center. This large and modern facility provides  
4 an abundance of natural light throughout the  
5 building, a state-of-the-art medical suite with  
6 sophisticated and modern medical equipment like an x-  
7 ray machine and a separate suite for dental work. In  
8 May of 2023, the City also broke ground on a brand  
9 new animal care center in the Bronx. Like Queens,  
10 this shelter will be the very first of its kind in  
11 the borough. Soon, the City will also cut the ribbon  
12 on a new adoption center next to the Manhattan Care  
13 Center. And finally, the Brooklyn Animal Care Center  
14 is undergoing complete renovation. The upgrades are  
15 part of the Administration's and ACC's mutual  
16 commitment to providing the best possible environment  
17 for the animals in our care and enhancing the  
18 services we offer to the community. once  
19 construction on all these new and innovative  
20 buildings are complete, the Council and New York City  
21 will have fulfilled the late Paul A. Vallone's  
22 commitment and promise to New Yorkers, a full-service  
23 animal shelter in every borough. ACC is grateful to  
24 be part of that reality and is committed to ensuring  
25

1  
2 the best outcomes for the most animals in partnership  
3 with the animal welfare community of this great city.

4 In closing, I want to express my gratitude to the  
5 City Council for its continued support of ACC. We're  
6 committed to our mission to end animal homelessness  
7 like being a resource for the community and ensuring  
8 that every New Yorker has access to the resources  
9 they need to adopt a pet or to care for their pets  
10 long-term. I invite the Health Committee and all  
11 members of Council to come for a tour of our centers,  
12 meet our staff, attend one of our community pet  
13 vaccine and wellness clinics, or simply adopt or  
14 foster from one of our shelters. We have all kinds  
15 of dogs, cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs to choose  
16 from. I am certain we could make a good match for  
17 you. A visit to any of our care centers will give  
18 context to my testimony, but also will help you see  
19 firsthand the challenge and the meaning of our work,  
20 and the positive impact that ACC is making on pets  
21 and people of New York City. In fact, individuals who  
22 want to make an impact right away are encouraged to  
23 attend our online dog foster orientation this Sunday.

24 More information and sign-up is available on our  
25 website at [NYCACC.org/foster](http://NYCACC.org/foster). I welcome any

1  
2 questions you may have, and I look forward to working  
3 with you to improve the lives of animals and pet  
4 owners across New York City. Thank you.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Good  
6 morning, Chair Schulman, members of the Health  
7 Committee and Council Members Brannan, Holden, and  
8 Brewer. My name is Corrine Schiff and I'm the Deputy  
9 Commissioner for Environmental Health at the New York  
10 City Health Department. On behalf of Commissioner  
11 Vasan, thank you for the opportunity to testify  
12 today. The Health Department is charged with  
13 overseeing a range of animal-related activities. We  
14 permit and inspect facilities such as animal  
15 shelters, grooming facilities, pet shops, boarding  
16 establishments, and animal exhibitions. We conduct  
17 training on small animal handling, issue state-  
18 mandated dog licenses, investigate animal nuisance  
19 complaints, animal bites, and dangerous dog  
20 incidents, fund low-cost spay/neuter services,  
21 monitor wildlife and domestic animals for rabies, and  
22 undertake rabies prevention activities. The Health  
23 Department is also responsible for managing and  
24 caring for the City's population of owner surrender,  
25 abandoned, homeless, and lost animals. The

1  
2 Department carries out these responsibilities by  
3 contracting with ACC to provide services Ms.  
4 Weinstock described in her testimony. We were  
5 excited to celebrate the opening of the beautiful  
6 Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal Care Center with you,  
7 Chair, along with ACC, the Vallone family, Health  
8 Commissioner, Veteran Services Commissioner, Mayor's  
9 Office of Animal Welfare, and so many other ACC  
10 supporters. Opening the first full-service animal  
11 shelter in Queens was a major milestone in the City's  
12 efforts to upgrade our animal shelter facilities, and  
13 it was especially meaningful to be there with the  
14 Vallone family, long-time champions of ACC to honor  
15 Paul Vallone. By the end of 2026, the City expects  
16 to have a full-service shelter operating in every  
17 borough. ACC is a national leader in animal welfare,  
18 and I want to thank Ms. Weinstock and ACC staff for  
19 their hard work for New York City. This is a  
20 mission-driven organization with staff deeply devoted  
21 to the welfare of animals and to helping people find  
22 and keep their pets. I'll now turn to Introduction  
23 1018, the legislation under consideration today. The  
24 Department appreciates the intent of this bill as we  
25 understand it which is to align Local Law with the

1  
2 new state law banning the sale of dogs, cats, and  
3 rabbits from pet shops. The Council had already  
4 prohibited pet shops from selling rabbits as well as  
5 guinea pigs, and banned the sale of dogs and cats  
6 supplied by certain dealers. Many of the changes  
7 proposed in the bill will help the Department enforce  
8 this new state prohibition when it goes into effect  
9 later this year, and we support those changes. We  
10 would like to work with the Council to assess whether  
11 some of the bill's provisions such as those  
12 addressing the source of dogs and cats available for  
13 sale are still necessary. Thank you for the  
14 opportunity to testify. We're happy to take your  
15 questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. I want  
17 to acknowledge we've been joined by Council Members  
18 Brewer and De La Rosa. Okay, so, one-- I have been  
19 to the new Paul Vallone Center and it seems really  
20 nice, and we have to-- what we have to work on now is  
21 some of the overcrowding and just in general based on  
22 the testimony that everyone gave and also a lot of my  
23 questions focus on spaying and neutering as well.  
24 So, let me start with by asking question. What role  
25

1  
2 does-- So, this is for DOHMH. What role does DOHMH  
3 play in animal welfare in New York City?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, the role  
5 of the Health Department or the issues that I just  
6 outlined in my testimony, and I work very closely  
7 with Ms. Weinstock in the work that they do at ACC.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: How does DOHMH  
9 evaluate the relationship between animal welfare and  
10 public health in New York City? What specific health  
11 issues related to animals does the Department  
12 currently monitor such as zoonotic diseases or pet  
13 overpopulation?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: It's a big--  
15 it's a big question. I will say that our Disease  
16 Control Division has Disease Detectives, and a lot of  
17 their work is monitoring reportable disease, some of  
18 which are connected to animals. I noted in my  
19 testimony the work that we do to monitor rabies in  
20 wildlife and to prevent rabies. We'd be happy to  
21 talk to you some more about all of the work that we  
22 do at the Health Department relating to animal and  
23 human interaction when it comes to health.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What role does  
25 DOHMH play in educating the public about responsible

1  
2 pet ownership, adoption and resources available for  
3 prospecting and current pet owners?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I'm glad you  
5 asked that. One of our functions is to educate New  
6 Yorkers about responsible pet ownership. I want-- I  
7 brought my "Be a Responsible Dog Owner" pamphlet.  
8 We'd love to get this out to Council Members so you  
9 can help us distribute this. Being a responsible pet  
10 owner is key, and we outline in here a number of  
11 things that we want New Yorkers who have pets to do,  
12 including getting a dog license.

13 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So, this is open.  
14 I'm not sure which or all of you want to answer this.  
15 How does the adoption process work? Because some of  
16 the people I've spoken to said it's a cumbersome  
17 process, so I want to see if there are ways that we  
18 can make it easier for people to adopt.

19 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: The process--  
20 there's many ways that one can adopt. We have mobile  
21 adoption events in different communities, and you can  
22 also adopt inside any of the shelters, and we also  
23 have people who foster animals who facilitate  
24 adoptions. In terms of process, there is an  
25 application to fill out just so that our adoption



1  
2 counselors can understand what you're looking for,  
3 and we invite people to come into the shelter and  
4 take a look and see the animals that we have. You  
5 can use our app to identify animals, dogs, cats,  
6 rabbits, and guinea pigs. To the extent that it's  
7 complicated we're-- we have a lot of animals and a  
8 lot of people are interested, and there is a process  
9 where one has to be a little patient with us. the  
10 goal is to get as many adopted as possible, and if  
11 there are other specific ways that we can make it  
12 even more effective, we're always willing to listen  
13 and see if that's feasible.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Is there-- maybe  
15 there's a way technology-wise or something along  
16 those lines that we can discuss and figure out. You  
17 know, I appreciate that. Also, what's the process to  
18 foster? And if you can go into a little more  
19 explanation of what fostering means and what the  
20 responsibilities are and how somebody can apply to do  
21 that, that would be great.

22 DIRECTOR SILVER: Do you mind if I add  
23 something on the adoption, I--

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Sure.  
25

1  
2 DIRECTOR SILVER: I just wanted to note,  
3 because I assume-- I don't-- if the question was  
4 directed only for ACC.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: No, no, no I said  
6 anybody can answer.

7 DIRECTOR SILVER: Yeah, as Risa-- of  
8 course, speaking to ACC's policy, I-- I have heard as  
9 well that some people have barriers. It's hard to  
10 adopt. I wanted to rescue an animal. And each  
11 organization that adopts animals out, of course, sets  
12 their own policies and how and procedures, so it can  
13 really vary depending on which organization and  
14 rescue you're working with. Animal sheltering  
15 leaders across the country are really promoting  
16 what's called Open Adoption philosophy, encouraging  
17 fewer barriers to adoption. So, you know, limiting--  
18 not-- not setting up, you know-- oh, well, if you  
19 don't have a back yard, you can't do the-- you know?  
20 But it doesn't mean that you don't have any  
21 requirements. You have-- it's conversation-based.  
22 And I know at ACC, the adoption counselors there,  
23 that's how they do their process. It's conversation-  
24 based. So, it's about finding the right fit, and not  
25 creating more barriers, because ultimately those

1  
2 adopters or those potential adopters are going to get  
3 their pet somewhere, and you want to connect them  
4 with the adoptable animals and also set up that  
5 relationship between rescue or shelter and adopter so  
6 that if there's any follow-up questions. So, it's a  
7 long answer just to say-- encouraging open adoptions--  
8 -

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]

10 Separate from this hearing, maybe we can set up a  
11 small taskforce with some of the rescue groups and  
12 talk about how we can make it easier. Wave your  
13 hands. Thanks. What-- let's see. How does DOHMH  
14 currently enforce New York City's pet shop laws and  
15 what challenges do you face in ensuring compliance.  
16 I presume a lot of them have shut down, the pet  
17 shops, but--

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, we-- the  
19 Health Department permits pet shops, and we conduct  
20 routine annual inspections and we also inspect in  
21 response to complaints. Generally, we see good  
22 compliance, but if there are issues where the pet  
23 shop is out of compliance, we issue a summons subject  
24 to a fine and we can take other enforcement action as  
25 well.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: How effective have  
3 the regulations been in preventing the sale of  
4 animals from puppy mills?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, I think  
6 the law that the Council enacted was quite effective  
7 in preventing the sale of dogs and cats that came  
8 from the certain breeders that are set out in that  
9 Local Law. We did a lot of work educating pet shops  
10 before the law went into effect. We saw good  
11 compliance, though not 100 percent compliance and so  
12 we did take enforcement action when we saw shops out  
13 of compliance.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I just want to  
15 note, so we passed last year, we passed the guinea  
16 pig bill to make sure that guinea pigs were not sold  
17 in pet shops, and as a result of that the population  
18 has gone down, right, in the shelters, correct? Of  
19 the-- I mean, the guinea pigs?

20 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: That's correct. It  
21 was very helpful.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So, you know, I  
23 just want to note that it took a while to get that  
24 passed, but we were able to do that last year, and it  
25 has been quite effective. Can you tell us like how

1  
2 much-- I think it's quite a number of percentage--  
3 quite a big percentage in terms of lowering the  
4 numbers of guinea pigs that were coming into the  
5 system, correct?

6 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Overall, yeah. I  
7 don't have specific data, but yes, the trend that we  
8 saw after the passage of that bill-- same thing with  
9 rabbits-- is that the number of rabbits and guinea  
10 pigs declined.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So, Commissioner,  
12 how do track compliance with the pet law?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We do our  
14 annual inspections. So every pet shops has to have a  
15 permit from us, and we will do an annual routine  
16 inspection, and then inspections in response to  
17 complaints, and that's how we identify whether the  
18 shops are in compliance with a host of issues, not  
19 only the source and prohibitions that have been set  
20 out by the Council and the Local Law, but the Health  
21 Code sets out a range of animal welfare provision  
22 that pet shops have to follow.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Is there a number  
24 or someplace that people can connect with at DOHMH to  
25 report somebody that's out of compliance?

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: People who  
3 observe pet shops out of compliance should call 311,  
4 and we take those complaints and follow up.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: To your knowledge,  
6 does 311 have a separate section or code for that?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Let me see  
8 if we can get the answer to that while we're here.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: If not, that's  
10 something that we might want to legislate.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So, now I want to  
13 talk about spaying and neutering for a little bit.  
14 Local Law 59 of 2011 requires that all free-roaming  
15 cats with owners be spayed or neutered to reduce the  
16 feral cat population and requires owners to submit  
17 proof of sterilization upon request by DOHMH. Under  
18 the law, owners may be fined between \$250 and \$500  
19 for letting their unsterilized cats run free. Is  
20 DOHMH in full-compliance with the requirements of  
21 this law?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: The Health  
23 Department does enforce that Local Law. So when we  
24 observe a cat that appears to be an outdoor cat, we  
25

1  
2 will ask the owner for information about spay/neuter  
3 status for that animal, yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: How many requests  
5 for proof of sterilization has DOHMH filed in the  
6 past year?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We don't  
8 have that data.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Do you not collect  
10 it?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We correct  
12 the information only where we have issued a summons  
13 for failing to comply, and in the instances where we  
14 have done that enforcement, we have found compliance,  
15 and so we do not have the data on having asked for  
16 the information.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Is there a reason  
18 for not doing that, or is there a funding issue,  
19 staffing issue?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: It has not  
21 been part of our protocol to document that in a way  
22 that we can pull the data.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: We'll revisit  
24 that. What circumstances would trigger a request by  
25 DOHMH for proof of sterilization?

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, these  
3 are typically inspections where we're-- where we are  
4 responding to a complaint or we're doing a rabies  
5 investigation, and so we will be out in the community  
6 making observations, and if we do see a cat that  
7 appears to be an owned cat that is allowed to roam  
8 outdoors, we will ask the owner for that information.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What-- how many  
10 notices-- let's see if you-- how many notices of  
11 violation has DOHMH issued in the past year?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: For this  
13 circumstance, you mean?

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Uh-hm.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, we have--  
16 - when we have conducted these inspections and made  
17 those observations about the cat, and asked the owner  
18 we have found that cat to have been altered, and so  
19 there have not been-- we have not issued violations.

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So none? Now,  
21 come-- folks, please.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Right, that  
23 is right. We have found compliance and we have not  
24 issued violations.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Does DOHMH provide  
3 access to low-cost spay and neuter services to help  
4 ensure that New Yorkers comply with the requirements  
5 of Local Law 59?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, the City  
7 through the Council's initiative have a program to  
8 offer low-cost spay and neuter services to people who  
9 meet income eligibility requirements.

10 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What additional  
11 resources are need to ensure adequate enforcement of  
12 the City's spay/neuter requirements?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We're not  
14 asking for additional resources.

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I didn't ask if  
16 you were asking for it. I'm asking what additional  
17 resources are needed to ensure enforcement. So  
18 you're saying you don't need any.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We don't  
20 need any additional resources to enforce.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What-- so I want  
22 to ask Ms. Weinstock, tell us the percentage--  
23 because I know we had talked about this when we met,  
24 the percent of animals that you get at the shelters  
25 that are not spayed or neutered.

1  
2 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Close to 59 percent  
3 of the animals coming in are not spayed or neutered.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I mean--

5 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: [interposing] It's  
6 been going up.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: This just shows  
8 that-- and you know, one of the reasons for having  
9 this hearing today to see what we may need to do  
10 legislatively to increase spaying and neutering  
11 opportunities for folks, so.

12 DIRECTOR SILVER: If I could just add,  
13 too? I'm so sorry.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yes, please. I'm  
15 sorry.

16 DIRECTOR SILVER: No, no, no, it's fine.  
17 I--

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] And  
19 also, I'm sure you're taking notes about this as well  
20 so that we--

21 DIRECTOR SILVER: Well, it reminded me  
22 that actually one of the projects that my office is  
23 working on is a flyer about spay/neuter. The Mayor's  
24 Office of Animal Welfare possibly co-branded flyer to  
25 explain the importance to do outreach to link to the

1  
2 Health Department's website that has some links to  
3 providers, and then just reiterating what I said in  
4 my testimony about this office exploring everything  
5 to see how we can increase accessibility.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So, one of the  
7 things that I had asked, and I presume once all of  
8 you are finished test-- the admin is finished  
9 testifying, there'll be somebody that stays to listen  
10 to the testimony, because there were organizations  
11 out there that do this work, and I want to see where  
12 we could do a public/private partnership as well so  
13 that we can take best practices and figure out how we  
14 can deal with problem together. Does DOHMH receive  
15 complaints of unlawful breeding and housing of  
16 animals for sale?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I do-- while  
18 we're on complaints I did-- I can answer your  
19 question about 311. There is a separate complaint  
20 function for complaints about pet shops including  
21 that the pet shop has received animals from an  
22 improper source.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So we would  
25 take complaints also about-- sorry, can you repeat

1 exactly what you were asking about complaints?

2 Complaints about animals being sold out of a home, is  
3 that what you said?  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yeah.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Yes, we  
7 would take complaints about that as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: We'll take a look.  
9 Do you have those stat-- I mean, I realize that you  
10 saw that they do take the complaints. Do we have  
11 those numbers or you just don't have them right now?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I don't have  
13 our complaint numbers, but we can certainly pull  
14 those and send them.

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: If you can pull  
16 those and send them--

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: [interposing]  
18 Yeah, we will do that.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Does-- I'm sorry.  
20 Oh, can the complaints of unlawful breeding and  
21 housing of animals for sale, do you know how many, or  
22 you're going to get back to us?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Let's get--  
24 we'll get back to you on the complaint data.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Alright. The  
3 Health Code prohibits keeping animals for sale in a  
4 dwelling. Has DOHMH enforced this provision, and how  
5 does DOHMH receive information about these violations  
6 other than 311, and what steps does it take to  
7 address them?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We have done  
9 enforcement. We learned about it through complaints,  
10 typically. These are difficult to enforce, and it is  
11 unusual. It is an unusual complaint. I don't have  
12 the numbers, but it is-- it is not a frequent  
13 complaint that we get.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. What  
15 enforcement actions has DOHMH taken against pet  
16 dealers that do not comply with the current pet shop  
17 regulations and what penalties are in place for  
18 continued violations?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, this is  
20 for animals from an improper source?

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Uh-hm.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, we have--  
23 - we have done some enforcement actions for the pet  
24 shops that were out of compliance. We will issue  
25 violations and then we can take additional

1 enforcement actions including, you know, ordering the  
2 pet shop to cease and desist the unlawful behavior,  
3 and when we take these actions, they're complicated  
4 in the sense that we prioritize the health and safety  
5 of the animals in the shop. So, we want to take an  
6 enforcement action that also recognizes that there  
7 are animals that will need to be cared for in an  
8 ongoing way.

9  
10 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What about online  
11 postings for animals? How do you-- how do you do  
12 enforcement in that regard?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I'll have to  
14 get back to you. I'm not sure that we enforce that  
15 or have the capacity, you know, the authority to  
16 enforce that. So we'll get back to you about that.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What are the types  
18 of facilities that DOHMH permits in terms of selling  
19 of pets?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We-- the  
21 Health Department permits pet shops.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I mean, do you--  
23 do you give permits to any commercial breeding  
24 kennels or persons who deal in pet animals in  
25 settings other than a traditional pet shop?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We do not.

There are state and federal permitting systems.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Does DOHMH collect and report data on the impact of the bill on the ban of rabbit and guinea pig sales?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I'm not aware of a reporting requirement. We have enforced those prohibitions. We've seen good compliance.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So how do you enforce compliance or the effectiveness, I'm sorry?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: How do we--

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] How do you monitor the effectiveness in reducing pet overpopulation and improving animal welfare?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We will conduct inspections, both the routine animal inspections and inspections in response to complaints. If we observe a pet shop selling prohibited animals such as a guinea pig or a rabbit or a dog or cat from a source that the Council has prohibited, we will issue violations and we can take additional enforcement actions if we see ongoing noncompliance.

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2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What are DOHMH's  
3 long-term plans for monitoring pet stores after  
4 these-- all this legislation goes into effect, and  
5 will-- I presume-- you made comment that there are  
6 routine inspections and audits.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, we're--  
8 we've been working for many months anticipating the  
9 new state law that goes into effect, middle of  
10 December, to make sure that the pet shops that are  
11 still selling dogs and cats-- although they are  
12 selling them from the sources that are permitted in  
13 New York City, but they will not be allowed to sell  
14 dogs/cats at all after December 15<sup>th</sup>. We've been in  
15 touch with all of them on an ongoing basis, helping  
16 them to be prepared to cease the activity that will  
17 become illegal. We've been communicating with them  
18 and we'll begin enforcement of that as soon as that  
19 state law becomes effective.

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, so Ms.  
21 Weinstein [sic], now I'm coming-- now I'm going to  
22 come and concentrate on the ACC center. So, what is  
23 the current capacity of each ACC shelter and how  
24 often do you exceed this capacity in each shelter?  
25



1  
2 And can you provide a breakdown by borough of shelter  
3 capacity?

4 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: When we speak about  
5 capacity, it's more than just space. It includes  
6 staff. It includes everything that's going on with  
7 all the populations, all the species. We currently  
8 have in care a lot of animals, and certainly we are  
9 looking at ways to creatively house all of these  
10 animals. The intake far exceeds the physical cage  
11 space in any of the care centers, and it's something  
12 that it's really difficult to plan for, because we do  
13 not want to warehouse animals. It's not about the  
14 number of cages. It's more about what is the  
15 capacity. In terms of each borough, we're talking  
16 about Manhattan, Staten Island, and Queens. And--

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Do  
18 you have those numbers, or?

19 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Well, right now,  
20 the entire census of the animals that we are housing,  
21 we are at 797 animals.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: And do you have the  
23 breakdown by borough? I mean, you can get it to us,  
24 but--

1  
2 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: [interposing] Well,  
3 Queens has over 400, and--

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] And  
5 that's because of Brooklyn, the Brooklyn shelter  
6 closing, right?

7 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Yes. I think it's  
8 a combination, however. I would say Queens has never  
9 had a full-service care center.

10 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Right.

11 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: And so I think that  
12 we're seeing animals from Brooklyn and a more-- more  
13 foot traffic from the borough of Queens.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: How many animals  
15 have been in ACC's care for over six months, and are  
16 there any trends you might have noticed and may play  
17 a role in why certain animals are harder to adopt?

18 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Animals that have  
19 been with us for over six months are large dogs.  
20 There's not a lot of them, but there-- you know,  
21 there's a trend. Some of the dogs just don't get  
22 adopted and they stay. So, you know, it's not the  
23 main-- our average length of stay right now is about  
24 14 days. Six months is a little above-- it's way  
25 above the norm. In terms of how to get visibility on

1  
2 them, we do a lot of social media. We invite people  
3 to come into the shelter. We ask all of our  
4 stakeholders to advocate, to, you know, talk about  
5 adoption, to direct people to our care centers. I  
6 mean, as I testified, there's no shortage of  
7 available animals to adopt, and the issues for why  
8 they're coming in, it just seems to outpace how many  
9 get adopted. And the challenges with dogs that are  
10 larger or that are longer stays, I think it's  
11 everything I've been testifying to-- it's  
12 affordability. For the same reasons that they're  
13 coming in, I think people are not as-- there's not as  
14 many people who have the afford-- have the  
15 wherewithal to adopt right now.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: One of the things  
17 that I was impressed with when I went to-- when I  
18 visited the Queens Center was that you have a program  
19 to try and get people to keep their animals, because  
20 if they-- especially if they can't afford them or  
21 there are issues. Can you talk a little bit about  
22 what you do in that regard?

23 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Yes. That's all  
24 under the umbrella of our admissions program. It's  
25 something that we're really proud of and something

1 for which the Queens Care Center was designed for.

2 So, if you notice when you walk in, you have-- there

3 are two doors. You can go to the left where

4 admissions are directed or to the right where

5 adoptions are directed. The admissions program is

6 really sensitive and painful process for individuals

7 who show up and say, "You're my last resort. I don't

8 know what to do." We have private room set-ups, so

9 that our admissions counselors can do surrender

10 prevention counseling which we feel is a very, very

11 important component to what we're seeing in animal

12 welfare right now. And the counseling can be just

13 starting with what is the issue. And if it's a

14 simple issue that can be corrected-- is it food? We

15 have a food pantry. They're not using the litter box.

16 We can help you. We try to provide as many resources

17 as we can to help that family keep their pet.

18 There's a lot of-- there's a lot of heartbreak on

19 that side of animal welfare, and on that side of the

20 building. That's why it was created with all those

21 private spaces. And we feel with the public clinic

22 that we're-- the clinic as part of the shelter, that

23 is going to be the next step in the arm of our

24  
25

1  
2 Surrender Prevention program. If you-- if your dog  
3 needs a dental, we can do it for you.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: About what  
5 percentage of people that come in need to say they  
6 want to surrender their pets go away with keeping  
7 them? I mean, approximately. I'm not asking for the  
8 exact.

9 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Well, in the past--  
10 this year we've been able to keep over 1,000 pets  
11 with their families.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: That's amazing.  
13 So out of how many that come in?

14 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Well, you know, we  
15 have a statistic of how many--

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] I  
17 mean, like-- no, like for example, the 60 percent, 70  
18 percent, 65 percent of those who come in that want to  
19 surrender their animals, you're able to keep them  
20 together with their owners?

21 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: I can get data for  
22 you, but--

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Okay.

24 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: you know,  
25 consulting with my--

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CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]

Because obvious--

PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: [interposing]

[inaudible] about 20--

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] I

mean, it seems like it's a successful program, I just want-- we just want the numbers.

PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: We think off-hand

about 20 percent, but I can get you more specific data.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. How does

ACC manage cases involving exotic pets or animals not commonly kept as domestic companions, and what happens to those animals that come into ACC's care?

PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Exotic animals is

any-- we consider anything other than a companion animal that can be adopted. In many ways, those are the easiest cases to handle, because we partner with very specific rescue organizations that take that type of animal. I know that we-- if you were-- if you took the tour on Tuesday-- I know you and I took a tour before that. There is a room that was created, the exotics room. We had a duck in there on Tuesday.

1  
2 So, those move pretty quickly, and we're very proud  
3 of those partnerships. That's really helpful.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What special care  
5 protocols are in place for senior animals, both  
6 during their time in the shelter and in efforts to  
7 find them adoptive or foster homes?

8 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Senior animals,  
9 just like young animals, they're all animals. They're  
10 all available for adoption, and that's part of the  
11 adoption process and what Alex mentioned that the  
12 conversation-- based on your lifestyle, a senior pet  
13 could be perfect for you. This is a-- especially if  
14 we're talking about a dog. This is a dog that's not  
15 going to want to go hiding. If you're lifestyle is  
16 such that a senior pet would be more suitable, we  
17 will direct you to senior pets. You know, they are a  
18 little harder to place, I think. A lot of people  
19 come in with family and they're looking for that  
20 lifelong companion, but we have a lot of-- we don't  
21 really base it on age. We really base it on what's  
22 the suitable placement with your-- what are your  
23 needs for a pet.

24 DIRECTOR SILVER: Can I piggyback on  
25 that? I'm sorry.

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CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Go ahead.

DIRECTOR SILVER: Just also about adoptions-- connected with the lowering barriers and open adoptions and why people might be running into problems, I would just-- I just want to take this opportunity to encourage anyone thinking of getting a pet to just keep an open mind. Like Risa was saying, you know, don't come in with a specific age [inaudible] restriction, and it's the same with breed or size, you know. They might be running into issues because they're looking for a very specific kind of animal, and if you have a conversation with a counselor who can help you meet the animal that has the right personality, the right lifestyle, the right requirements for you. I just want to throw that--

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] No, and while we're talking about it, I mean, do you guys do any kind of work with the other agencies like Department, you know, for older adults or whatever that maybe somebody at a senior center is looking for a pet, or you know, is there any kind of synergy there, or? Anybody that wants to answer.

PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: We-- not necessarily a partnership, but we-- it's something to



1  
2 explore. When we have off-site adoption events, it's  
3 really those sites are identified by areas that  
4 really want pets where they've been successful. For  
5 other centers or other agencies, we've done a lot of  
6 tabling events, just for awareness, so people  
7 understand you could come in and adopt a senior.  
8 This might be a good-- you know, a good connection.  
9 It's more-- I think more awareness than actually  
10 having--

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]

12 Right.

13 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: an adoption  
14 partnership with certain--

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Maybe  
16 it's something to look at.

17 DIRECTOR SILVER: I think there was  
18 recently-- I don't want to get it wrong, but I think  
19 earlier this year there was an outreach event that we  
20 connected like a senior center and ACC as outreach.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Because it's  
22 possible that, especially at a senior center,  
23 somebody doesn't want a young dog, because you know,  
24 they're older or whatever. They want a dog that's  
25 mature. So, just something to think about in terms

1  
2 of trying to see if there's opportunities in some of  
3 the agencies to do something like that. How many  
4 fulltime veterinarians and veterinary technicians  
5 does ACC employ, and is the current staff sufficient  
6 for the demand?

7 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Based on our  
8 population--

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
10 You're under oath. Go ahead. [laughter]

11 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: The current  
12 staffing for veterinarians and licensed vet techs is  
13 not at the number we want it to be. We have always  
14 kept those positions opened, because they're very,  
15 very competitive to hire in those departments. It's  
16 really important to note that we could have lots of  
17 vets, but if we don't have the vet tech support,  
18 that's not a good model. We continue to provide  
19 medical services. We use per-diem vets to fill  
20 holes. We recently in the last week have brought on  
21 a medical director who was part of a fellowship with  
22 the ASPCA and shelter medicine, and we're really  
23 excited as far as work that she brings to ACC, and  
24 that's-- we're always growing that department. We  
25 have a lot of animals, and we do a lot of work on

1  
2 these animals, and it takes a lot of time, and I  
3 think until we have that perfect number, that  
4 position will always-- those positions will always be  
5 open.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What strategies  
7 does ACC use to recruit and retain volunteers?

8 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: We hold regular  
9 volunteer orientations. We have a volunteer  
10 department with a manger who is charged with creating  
11 the program and seeing the program through,  
12 determining what level of animal husbandry you not  
13 only want to do but are qualified to do. There are  
14 also lots of other ways that people can volunteer.  
15 They don't have to necessarily handle animals. We  
16 have it on social media. We post it on our website.  
17 We-- you know, we ask all of our stakeholders to  
18 share our information about when we volunteer  
19 trainings. We recently did one in Queens in-person.  
20 There were over 100 people who signed up to volunteer  
21 in Queens, and then the process from there is  
22 onboarding.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: On average-- I'm  
24 going back to spaying and neutering for a minute. On  
25

1  
2 average, how many animals does ACC spay or neuter per  
3 month?

4 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Per month.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Want to do it per  
6 year, is that what you have?

7 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Well, I would say--  
8 on average per month we spay 400 animals.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What are your  
10 biggest challenges in implementing the City's spay  
11 and neuter requirements, and what is some of the  
12 things the City can do to help alleviate these  
13 issues?

14 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: So, there are two  
15 main challenges. One is the number of animals coming  
16 in that need spay and neuter. So, we have to keep up  
17 with that. And then the second challenge is  
18 staffing. You need a lot of people to do  
19 spay/neuter. That's not just the veterinarian. You  
20 need the support staff. So, it's resources and it's  
21 trying to address what's coming in.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: How involved is  
23 ACC in the City's Trap, Neuter, Return programs for  
24 managing the feral cat population, and what are the  
25 major challenges and successes of this program?

1  
2 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: We don't have a  
3 robust Trap, Neuter, Return.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay.

5 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: We do work with  
6 Community Cats, and but Trap, Neuter, Return is not a  
7 major piece of our portfolio.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Like I said, we're  
9 going to-- as I said earlier, we're going to look at  
10 some public/private partnerships in terms of trying  
11 to figure this out, because I think there's a lot of  
12 talent and resources that are available in this city  
13 for this kind of stuff. I want to acknowledge that  
14 we've been joined by Council Member Feliz online.  
15 I'm going to open it up to some of my other  
16 colleagues so that-- to give them an opportunity. I  
17 may come back to ask questions. I'm going to ask  
18 Council Member Brannan.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you,  
20 Chair. How much do we spend every year on spay and  
21 neuter? How much does the City spend?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: In addition  
23 to the resources that we provide to ACC which spays  
24 and neuters animals that it adopts out and provides  
25 to animals that go out to rescue groups, the City has

1  
2 a funding for \$3 million for six years. The current  
3 contract that we provide is for six years, \$3  
4 million. So that would enable us to provide 24,000  
5 surgeries.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, it's \$3  
7 million over six years?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Correct.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: do you think  
10 that's enough?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: The program  
12 that the Council established was to set up the Animal  
13 Population Control Fund. The funds are made  
14 available through the licensing fees that we generate  
15 for people who license an unaltered dog, and so-- and  
16 we-- and our goal is to spend down all of those  
17 resources.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: And when was--  
19 when did you get that money? It's a six-year  
20 contact. When did it start?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: The current  
22 contract started November 2022.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: And how much have  
24 you spent down?

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I don't  
3 have-- I don't have the spending down so far, but I  
4 can get that to you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: And what would  
6 happen if you ran out of money?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: That I don't  
8 know.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: It's never  
10 happened before?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: That has not  
12 happened before. That would be a great problem. Let  
13 me get back to you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: It seems  
15 shocking that we wouldn't run out of money, right?  
16 If people knew that you offered those services, I'd  
17 assume that \$3 million would not be anywhere near  
18 enough for six years.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Well, the--  
20 we're in the first part of the \$6 million-- sorry,  
21 the \$3 million, six-year contract, so we'll see how--  
22 whether we spend that out, but we would welcome-- you  
23 know, we want people to know about this program. We  
24 would welcome your assistance, making sure that  
25 people know about it. And then there's the

1  
2 challenges that the providers may face in making sure  
3 that they're able to deliver.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I mean, we're  
5 here to be partners. The issue that-- and certainly  
6 you know, serving as Finance Chair, our challenge is  
7 that you've got to help us help you, because when  
8 we're in budget negotiations and we're fighting to  
9 get more money for XYZ agency, and you know, we're  
10 going back and forth with different commissioners.  
11 In private they'll tell us, yeah, we need a lot more  
12 money, but then when OMB calls or the Mayor calls you  
13 say you're fine. So, then we look like-- you know,  
14 we've got no back-up. So, it's-- we want to help,  
15 but we need to be on the same page when we're in  
16 budget negotiations, because then if we're saying  
17 look, Health Department, ACC need more money for  
18 these services, and then they say, well, yeah, but we  
19 talked to DOH and they said they're good. You know,  
20 I understand no one wants to look like, you know,  
21 they're not able to do their job, but it's not  
22 helpful when we're not on the same page there. I  
23 want to talk about interagency collaboration. I mean,  
24 part of the reason why we wrote and passed the bill  
25 to start the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare was



1  
2 because what we were seeing was, you know, when-- you  
3 know, when an animal got loose from a slaughter  
4 house, suddenly you had 10 different agencies going  
5 like this trying to figure out who was in charge of  
6 what. That was really one of the first, you know,  
7 what got me thinking about starting the Mayor's  
8 Office of Animal Welfare. So, you know, it touches  
9 so many different agencies, and what the Department  
10 of Transportation thinks about animals, God only  
11 knows. Have you seen better interagency coordination  
12 now that you've got the Mayor's Office of Animal  
13 Welfare?

14 DIRECTOR SILVER: Thank you for that, and  
15 thank you again for-- just, I think it's important to  
16 highlight that again. Animal Welfare does not exist  
17 in its own bubble as its own entity. It's going to  
18 overlap as you recognized with the work that all  
19 these agencies are doing that are typically focused  
20 on human beings. I'm not sure that I'm the best  
21 person to compare it. You know, I-- in terms of has  
22 it gotten better. I can certainly tell you that I  
23 think it's wonderful that we have such an office that  
24 can help with the coordination and I am frequently in  
25 touch with a variety of agencies, some of whom, you

1  
2 know, everyone here would expect. The Health  
3 Department I'm frequently in touch with it. The  
4 Parks Department, they deal with wildlife. NYPD  
5 about animal cruelty. But then as you mentioned DOT,  
6 I am sometimes emailing them about animal issues or  
7 DCWP, or of course NYCHA, DSS. You know, all these  
8 agencies that are wouldn't-- if you're not in the  
9 animal world wouldn't necessarily come to mind as  
10 partners. So, I do think that having an office, you  
11 know, Mayoral Office of Animal Welfare is very  
12 helpful for that, and to bring players-- all the  
13 players together to get everybody brainstorming to  
14 try to hone down on some of the really challenging  
15 issues when there may not seem like there's a clear  
16 answer and we can move forward on that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I guess the  
18 question is for Ms. Weinstock. Do-- I mean, just  
19 largely, do you agree with what the Council is saying  
20 and what the advocates are saying that, you know, the  
21 stat you mentioned-- I think it was you-- about how  
22 nearly 60 percent of animals that are surrendered  
23 through ACC are not spayed or neutered. Do you agree  
24 that we've got a serious upstream problem here that  
25 we're-- you know, where everyone's freaking out

1  
2 because the shelters are crowded and at times we have  
3 to suspend surrenders and abandonments because there  
4 was no room. I think our shelters are going to  
5 continue to be packed until we figure out what we're  
6 doing to subsidize affordable veterinary care and  
7 really grow that outreach for TNR services. Do you  
8 agree with that?

9 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: I agree, there are  
10 a multitude of reasons why we're packed, and also  
11 believe that the data-- 60 percent of our animals  
12 that aren't spayed or neutered, if that changed-- and  
13 it's going up. If that changed, I think that it  
14 would be a little bit of a pressure release on the  
15 care center because we are in the position of being  
16 required by law to alter every animal before it's  
17 placed with a rescue partner or put up-- sent out for  
18 adoption.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Are there other-  
20 - so what are some of the other issues? If that's  
21 not the top issue, what are-- what would you say are  
22 some of the other reasons why the shelters are so  
23 crowded?

24 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: affordability, I  
25 think. As I've testified, what we're seeing as the

1  
2 top reasons are financial and financial is really  
3 big, big number. A lot of times financial situations  
4 we can help. It's food. They have trouble paying the  
5 rent, the lights, the electricity. We can give you  
6 free, you know, access to free food, and in return,  
7 what we do is we microchip and we license your pet  
8 and we also give you information about wellness  
9 clinics. The clinic that we have coming down the  
10 pipe I think will also help tremendously because  
11 people-- again, it's an affordability issue. People  
12 are surrendering because the cost of care is so high.  
13 So if we can help you out through some type of  
14 medical service in our clinic, that's what we're  
15 going to do. Financial is a really big issue, and  
16 then also housing falls under that umbrella. There  
17 are a lot of restrictions, especially for lower  
18 income housing, the pet deposit, the restrictions on  
19 size. There was a really good article in the New York  
20 Times recently about the disparity in housing and  
21 rentals and apartments in New York City where if you  
22 are-- the restrictions on low income housing are much  
23 greater in terms of pets and pets in the home, than  
24 it is on other income levels, and we are seeing that.  
25 We are really a social service agency. We are

1  
2 helping people try to survive, and part of that  
3 survival in the City is keeping your pet, because  
4 everyone saw through the pandemic the emotional tug  
5 and the value that pets offer. When a family comes  
6 in or a person comes in and says I just-- I can't  
7 handle this anymore, that's-- we've really-- we've  
8 failed that person and so we have set our services so  
9 that it's not all about adoption. We would love to  
10 adopt every single animal out, but that's not the  
11 strategy. Strategy has to be managing what is coming  
12 in, and by offering these resources I think we could  
13 start to chisel a way a bit, but I think it-- it  
14 really takes a lot of community collaboration,  
15 collaboration with Council and the City.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay, just a few  
17 more. I want to get back to the Chair. How-- just  
18 even anecdotally, how many times has surrendered a  
19 pet to ACC and say it's because-- due to housing?  
20 They have to move. They can't afford where they're  
21 going and the new place doesn't allow pets.

22 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: It's one of the top  
23 reasons for surrender.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay. And the--  
25 for the-- could you explain a little bit-- I don't

1  
2 know if this is for Alex or maybe DOH. But for the  
3 animal cruelty in law enforcement-- so, I know they  
4 disbanded that original NYPD unit, right, that used  
5 to go out, the one they had the TV show about? It's  
6 a great show.

7 DIRECTOR SILVER: So, this year we  
8 actually marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the  
9 partnership between NYPD and the ASPCA. So, previous  
10 to the current structure, the ASPCA was responsible  
11 for the entire City of humane law enforcement. And  
12 now we have the entire Police Department of New York  
13 City that can and is responsible for enforcing animal  
14 cruelty.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Right.

16 DIRECTOR SILVER: But they partner and I  
17 don't know if the ASPCA is going to speak to this  
18 today, but they partner with their experts. So,  
19 animal cruelty victims will be taken that-- in part  
20 of cases-- will be taken to the ASPCA where they have  
21 a veterinary forensics team that will work with them.  
22 So it's a very close partnership between the ASPCA  
23 and NYPD, but we have the NYPD. And then as part of  
24 its partnership, what was created was the Animal  
25 Cruelty Investigations Squad which is a unit under

1 the detective's bureau focused on animal cruelty.

2 So, that's an advancement. You know, we just have  
3 more resources at our disposal now.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: And how does  
5 your office collaborate with them?

6 DIRECTOR SILVER: How does my office  
7 what?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Collaborate with  
9 them?

10 DIRECTOR SILVER: You know, ideally,  
11 everyone-- we need to get the word out that if anyone  
12 is concerned about animal abuse or neglect to report  
13 it to 311 or 911 if it's in progress. So, the Office  
14 of Animal Welfare is not meant to be the place where  
15 you go, because we have a system in place, but what  
16 the office can do is certainly follow up. If  
17 something seems like it's not working, if you're not  
18 getting the attention, I always ask people, you know,  
19 send me the 311 service request number. I can follow  
20 up, and I'm frequently in touch with the Animal  
21 Cruelty Investigation Squad at NYPD asking them  
22 questions, seeing if we need to look into something.  
23 But I-- you know, the office does not have  
24 enforcement powers itself.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: The last thing  
3 for me for now, have you seen progress? Are there--  
4 have you seen success in prosecution and seeing that  
5 through?

6 DIRECTOR SILVER: That is a good  
7 question. The number of cases are posted. There's  
8 an NYPD website that has it. I don't have it off the  
9 top of my head. I can look into it. And then I  
10 don't recall if that's where prosecutions are. I'd  
11 have to get back to you on that. But I think there  
12 have certainly been more cases-- I'm pretty sure I'm  
13 correct. I think there've been a lot more cases that  
14 have been able to be brought because of--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: [interposing] I  
16 worked--

17 DIRECTOR SILVER: this partnership.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I worked on a  
19 bill when I was a staffer under Councilman Gentile  
20 for the Animal Abuse Registry.

21 DIRECTOR SILVER: Yep.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So I'd love to  
23 get an update on that.

24 DIRECTOR SILVER: That is-- yeah. So, my  
25 understanding of that is any organization that adopts



1 out animals has to check the Animal Abuse Registry.

2 So it's not that it's open to everybody. Everybody

3 just can't see the private details of someone, but an

4 organization that's part of their process would make

5 sure that they're not on that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: And is there a

7 reporting mechanism there? Like, do they say, you

8 know, this month we had three people who are on the

9 registry try to adopt a-- you know.

10 DIRECTOR SILVER: You mean for every

11 organization that adopts to report to a central--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: [interposing]

13 Yeah.

14 DIRECTOR SILVER: location? I'm not--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: [interposing]

16 Like, how do we know if it's working?

17 DIRECTOR SILVER: aware of that. I would

18 have to look into it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yeah, I guess

20 the only way it was working is if we were-- we knew

21 we were stopping people, right?

22 DIRECTOR SILVER: Yes. Yeah, I don't

23 know how many people are trying adopt after it, and I

24 believe it's two-- five years they cannot adopt. So

1  
2 someone who was convicted, you know, several years  
3 could eventually be off-- I believe-- off the  
4 registry.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay.

6 DIRECTOR SILVER: But I'm happy to look  
7 into that further and discuss more.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Cool. Chair,  
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Now,  
11 I'm going to give it over to Council Member Marmorato  
12 to ask some questions.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you,  
14 Chair Schulman. Thank you. This is amazing to see  
15 how many people showed up today. I'm really  
16 impressed by this. I think this is one of the bigger  
17 committee meetings that I've gone to. So, I do want  
18 to kind of shift gears a little bit here, and go a  
19 little bit off-topic, but still concerning our pets  
20 and I want to discuss mosquito spraying and our pets.  
21 And Commissioner Schiff, I know that your  
22 organization is in charge with spraying within the  
23 five boroughs, and I hope that you can answer some  
24 questions for me today, and if you can't get the  
25 answers for me today, that you can email over to my

1 office. So, one [inaudible] used for spraying is  
2 called Anvil 10+10 and it's relatively non-toxic  
3 after a short inhalation. It's moderately toxic  
4 after short term skin contact, but with high  
5 concentration exposures, it's harmful to humans and  
6 pets. An active ingredient in Anvil 10+10 is d-  
7 phenothrin, and this ingredient does not mix with  
8 water, which is good, but it does bond to the soil.  
9 So, my concern is, are there any concerns for animals  
10 and pets that touch and eat off of the soil that has  
11 been sprayed?  
12

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, what I  
14 can say now, and what I think we should do is set up  
15 a separate meeting so we can talk to you about our  
16 West Nile Virus prevention program which is why we  
17 conduct mosquito praying. I would say that we use  
18 very, very low amounts of-- a teaspoon for an area  
19 that size of a football field. And we share the  
20 environmental concerns that are implicit in your  
21 question. But I don't have that information with me  
22 for this hearing, but I would-- it's a really  
23 important public health program. West Nile virus can  
24 be an extremely dangerous illness and we're very  
25 proud of this work. So what I'd like to do is get

1  
2 back to you and even set up a time that we can talk  
3 you through what we do in this program and how we  
4 work and we monitor mosquitoes around the City  
5 measuring mosquito infectivity so that we're only  
6 spraying when we see high levels of West Nile virus  
7 infectivity in mosquitoes, and drawing boundaries of  
8 where we're spraying, where we think that people are  
9 at most risk of West Nile virus.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yeah. I know.  
11 I've been in contact with your office, and  
12 unfortunately they have not given me a list of  
13 ingredients within-- we're been doing our own  
14 research on this, and it's been a little frustrating  
15 not to have emails returned, and just being that  
16 we're talking about pets, I don't know we do have a  
17 big stray colony within my district, and I was just  
18 really concerned how that was going to interact with  
19 the cats, and--

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: [interposing]  
21 So, let's set up-- let's set up a time.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, I would  
23 like that. Alright, thank you. Thank you, Chair.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
25 much. Council Member Ariola?

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you, Chair.  
3 So, I'd like to get back to the 311 where you said  
4 that we can report animal abuse. That's incorrect.  
5 It kicks you immediately to 911.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I'm sorry.  
7 Are you looking at-- I think it says if it's in  
8 progress, am I correct?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: This is the only-  
10 - when I put in for 311, there's nothing on the  
11 landing page, and then I queried animal abuse, and it  
12 kicks to 911. So, what can we do? What is the  
13 number for a hotline to call for any rescuer, any  
14 person that sees or is being called about animal  
15 abuse at the time, so that your offices can come out?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, the  
17 question that I would-- the question that I heard  
18 about 311 was about complaints about pet shops. So,  
19 that's what we just-- that's what my colleagues  
20 checked, that 31 availability to report a concern  
21 about a pet shop, including that the pet shop was  
22 offering an animal from a prohibited source. As for  
23 animal abuse, we can check.

24 DIRECTOR SILVER: Yeah, I just-- I'm not  
25 sure if we're looking at the same page. So, when you

1  
2 go to 311 and you put in "animal abuse," it says,  
3 "Call 911 to report animal abuse in progress." And  
4 then it goes on to say, "You can report neglect or  
5 abuse of animal in the City." It continues, and it  
6 lets you file-- "Report the neglect or abuse of  
7 animal," and if you click on that-- and it's the same  
8 if you call 311. It give you a form where you can  
9 then fill out the problem details. So for example,  
10 here it lists a variety, "chained, in car, neglected,  
11 no shelter, other, torture." And you can describe  
12 it, and you can submit. So it's an online forum, but  
13 if you call 311, what should happen is I believe it  
14 connects you to the precinct that is in the address.  
15 But the idea is 911--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: [interposing]  
17 which is--

18 DIRECTOR SILVER: [interposing] if someone  
19 is actively--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: [interposing]  
21 Right, but which is kicked to 911. And you know what  
22 happens with 311, and everyone here can attest to it,  
23 they close it out. That's what we--

24 DIRECTOR SILVER: [interposing]  
25 [inaudible] follow up with my office.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: it's closed out.

DIRECTOR SILVER: Yeah, and that's where I can get followed up with.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: So, what I want to talk about is-- because we talked about budget before. Council Member Brannan brought it up, and you didn't have a clear answer. So, for the Mayor's Office, what is your budget and operating-- what is your operating budget, and what is your staffing level?

DIRECTOR SILVER: So, the Mayor's Office, as mentioned, it's the first in the country and it's relatively new. It's about four-- four or five years old, almost five, not quite. The staffing it's small. It's one person solely issued on animal issues, myself, but we are housed within and we have the support, the way it's set up, of the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit. So, as people may know, there's borough directors. There's liaisons that have very deep connections with community members and community organizations. So, I lean on quite a few of my colleagues in that. I sit amongst them within the Community Affairs Unit. Of course, we could always do more with more resources.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Okay, and then--  
3 may I? Okay. I want to ask the same question for  
4 DOHMH. For these problems, what is your staffing and  
5 your operating budget?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I take the  
7 question these problems to mean all of the work that  
8 we do regarding animals, yes? So, I'm going to get  
9 back to you about that budget.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Okay. Ma'am, your  
11 staffing and budget?

12 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Our staffing as it  
13 regards cruelty?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: As regard to  
15 animals. Let's say a rescuer calls or I call or  
16 anyone gives a call, what is-- what can we-- what do  
17 you have in resources available to help all the  
18 rescuers in this room, the animals who need the help  
19 and the people who are trying to help them?

20 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: When we receive  
21 calls identifying an animal in distress or cruel--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: [interposing] No,  
23 no, I need to know what the number is. How many  
24 staff and how much money? Because according to  
25



1  
2 Council Member Brannan, when they ask at the Finance  
3 hearings, you guys don't ask for extra money. Why?

4 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Is the question how  
5 many staff does ACC currently have?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: How many ACC  
7 staff do you have and what is your current operating  
8 budget?

9 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: We currently have  
10 315 staff, and our contract with the Department of  
11 Health is \$33.5 million.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: \$33.5 million,  
13 how much of that money goes to administrative costs?

14 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: A very small  
15 percentage of that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: I'd like to know  
17 the percentage.

18 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: I don't have that  
19 available with me.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: We need to know  
21 that.

22 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Okay. It's broken  
23 down--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: [interposing]  
25 Because you have \$33.5 million to work with and the

1  
2 rescuers in this room are putting money out of their  
3 pocket to save animals on a daily basis.

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Come on.

6 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: I understand that  
7 it is a very large number, and I'm very grateful to  
8 the City and the Administration for that very large  
9 number. I think that it's very important to look at  
10 the budget in the context of the budget. There are  
11 facilities and leases-- there's other things that  
12 have nothing to do with the personnel and the actual  
13 day-to-day operation of ACC. So, it seems much  
14 larger, but I will--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: [interposing]

16 Well, it's all part of your operating budget.

17 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: tell you that it's  
18 not \$34 million that is going to every animal or the  
19 person to care for that animal. It sounds-- out of  
20 context--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: [interposing] No,  
22 I understand. I understand.

23 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: without better  
24 understanding.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: There's a lot  
3 included, but I don't-- what I'm not hearing from any  
4 one of you is really how you're helping the rescuers,  
5 how you're helping the cats, the dogs, and we're  
6 going to get into that. So, all three agencies are  
7 saying that you have a wonderful relationship with  
8 other agencies like law enforcement, FDNY, DSNY, New  
9 York City Parks. I have an issue in my district  
10 right now where exotic animals, not ducks-- exotic  
11 animals are being tortured and being abandoned. When  
12 ACC was called by law enforcement on various levels  
13 of government, they were told we don't get involved  
14 unless the animal is dangerous. Do you find that  
15 statement to be true?

16 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: I do not know the  
17 context of what you are referring to.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: So, the abandoned  
19 animals there are large pigs, some goats, and they're  
20 being slaughtered.

21 DIRECTOR SILVER: Could we follow up on--  
22 I would love to have a meeting with you on that and  
23 hear more about it and understand what's going on.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Well, we're  
25 already addressing it with many of the people in this

1  
2 room, because they're out there doing the work that  
3 your agencies should be doing. What--

4 DIRECTOR SILVER: [interposing] We'll  
5 follow up. We'll follow up with your office.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Okay, that would  
7 be great. When you say you have a relationship with  
8 rescuers, especially even the NYCHA housing, how does  
9 that-- how do you make that contract? How do you  
10 contract with that rescue service? And I'd like to  
11 know who it is.

12 DIRECTOR SILVER: I think I mentioned  
13 that. Yeah, so I mentioned that-- there's two  
14 different things. One is the Office of Animal  
15 Welfare is frequently contacted by and in touch with  
16 individual rescuers and rescue organizations and  
17 trying to collaborate with them in agency. So, for  
18 example, sometimes there have been rescuers who have  
19 been working in part of the City where they need  
20 access to a city-controlled site, right? So, I'll  
21 work with the agency to try to figure out who can get  
22 access, what's needed to resolve this. So, there's  
23 that kind of coordination. With NYCHA it's  
24 different. NYCHA on its own, and I don't want to  
25 speak for them, so we'll have to get back and follow

1  
2 up with any specific questions, but they have a  
3 contract that it went-- again, it went through NYCHA  
4 not through the Office of Animal Welfare-- to  
5 contract with well-known animal rescue organizations  
6 to do TNR. I think that's actually-- you know, as we  
7 talk about support for rescuers, I think that's a  
8 very promising model. So, I'm happy to speak  
9 further, you know, with NYCHA with you and figure  
10 something out.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Right. You also  
12 mentioned, ACC, that you don't really do a lot of  
13 trap, neuter and release, right? But the people in  
14 this room do, and they often times have a problem  
15 because they cannot afford. So you say that you  
16 provide, especially the new one in Queens, affordable  
17 neutering and spaying. What is considered  
18 affordable, and how do they qualify. You said it  
19 goes-- it depends on income. When you're talking  
20 about rescuers that are coming in-- so that's me if I  
21 have a pet and I want to have the pet neutered or  
22 spayed, and then you look at my income and then I'm  
23 charged accordingly. What about the rescue  
24 organizations? The rescue organizations that are  
25 working on a bare minimum, how would that be treated?

1  
2 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: The rescue  
3 organizations that we work with who pull animals from  
4 ACC re getting spay and neuter and vaccines and  
5 medical exams. The rescuers that need the help in  
6 terms of trap, neuter, return-- ACC doesn't have the-  
7 - it's not in our contract to trap cats and to then  
8 put them back in the community. We do work with  
9 community rescue groups. We have a community cat  
10 program that is similar, in that they have the  
11 ownership of those cats, and we have actually done  
12 spay/neuter in a limited basis, not to the extent of  
13 a robust TNR program, but that is not part of our  
14 funding with the City of New York.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: The funding that  
16 you're going to back to us on, on how much is spent  
17 on that kind of activity, right? Oaky, I'm going to  
18 wrap up. So, we recently-- a year ago, opened up a  
19 base camp-- this is for DOHMH-- a base camp over at  
20 Floyd Bennett Field, and many animals were displaced  
21 at that point. What type of input did you have when  
22 that base camp went up and were there any animals  
23 that were rescued because of the building of that  
24 base camp.

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I'll have to  
3 get back to you on.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: So, I'm just  
5 going to close by saying that what I'm hearing here  
6 is that there's a complete abandonment of your  
7 duties, and you need to really understand that these  
8 rescuers need your help and they need you to do more  
9 for them. You need to really stick to your mission  
10 statement. I work very closely with a number of them.  
11 I'm not contracted with them. They're not contracted  
12 with anyone. These are good people who go out and  
13 help, and when I call ACC, ASPCA, DOHMH, and I get  
14 pushback, there are these rescuers that come, and  
15 they just did recently, and they helped with the  
16 issue with the exotic animals. So, do your job  
17 better. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank-- so folks,  
19 come on. I just want to acknowledge that we've been  
20 joined by Council Member Menin, and before I give it  
21 over to the next Council Member, I want to just say  
22 that that's part of-- what Council Member Ariola was  
23 talking about was what I was talking about earlier,  
24 too, in terms of private/public partnerships where we  
25 have to really all work together on this to make sure

1  
2 that our animals are kept safe and that we do what we  
3 can for them. Now, I'm going to give it over to  
4 Council Member Holden. I just want to say for the  
5 other Council Members that are speaking, we want to  
6 give the public an opportunity to testify, so if you  
7 can please keep a little bit brief, that would be  
8 appreciated. Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair.  
10 So, you know, we're sitting here and, you know,  
11 Council Member Ariola's questions were right on and  
12 her comments. There's a frustration out there.  
13 There's a frustration that when we call for animal  
14 abuse that we don't get-- we get the precinct showing  
15 up. We get the precinct officers showing up. Now,  
16 they're holding five 911 jobs. Are they going to  
17 treat a complaint about animal cruelty seriously?  
18 And the answer is no. My experience in the seven  
19 years of the Council. There's a huge hole right here  
20 that we're not filling, and it's up to the local  
21 groups that we fund a little bit. We give them a  
22 small piece of our funding, obviously, but it's not  
23 resonating. It's not working and the City--  
24 especially the Health Department, is asleep at the  
25 wheel. This is the truth. My seven years, I really-



1  
2 - you know, you go to the Health Department-- the  
3 fact that you can't, you know-- Deputy Commissioner,  
4 the fact that you can't tell me, tell us, how many  
5 people are working in your office for Animal Welfare.  
6 You can't come up with that number. You should know  
7 that coming to the hearing about this. So I'm  
8 frustrated. We're not giving enough. And giving the  
9 pandemic, coming out of the pandemic, ACC was  
10 overwhelmed, because nobody-- a lot of people-- very  
11 few adoptions. We couldn't even contact one another,  
12 and they were left holding the bag, and where was the  
13 Health Department? I'm just-- I'm appalled at how  
14 the City-- the City brags that we're doing a lot  
15 more, we've done more for animal-- yeah, for animal  
16 welfare. That might be true from the past  
17 administrations, but we're woefully-- and that's a  
18 disinvestment over decades in the City for animals.  
19 Just look at-- let me ask the Health Department.  
20 Have you gone into the live markets and inspect  
21 those, is that under your jurisdiction.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Those are  
23 under state jurisdiction.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, but not  
25 yours.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. And do you contact with the state about this when you get a complaint? When somebody calls 311 about that, the live markets, do you work with the state?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We will refer those issues to the state.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And what about the horse carriage industry, do you go into the stables and inspect those regularly or answer complaints on horses that seem lame and can't-- and seem to be laboring in the heat or the cold or inclement weather? Do you go into the stables or do you inspect the locations around Central Park?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We do.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: You do. And on a regular basis? How often do you go into the stables?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We're in the stables regularly. I'll get back to you about the frequency of the stable inspections.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, you don't know the number. Again, this is consistent with the Health Department. This what I've witnessed, and the Mayor's Office has one person in the animal welfare,

1  
2 unfortunately. We talked a few years ago, and it  
3 still hasn't gone up unfortunately. The problem I  
4 have with some of your comments about, you know, the  
5 animal cruelty NYPD, I don't even know if they're  
6 functioning really. I really don't think so. Because  
7 every time we've complained, we get an answer like--  
8 especially about the horses. We get, oh, well, the  
9 vet for the industry said that Ryder-- the horse that  
10 collapsed, was okay.

11           DIRECTOR SILVER: Yeah, and in all cases,  
12 please follow up with me if there's a specific-- just  
13 like that or anything else that comes up. I think,  
14 you know, there are trainings that go on for NYPD  
15 officers. There's ASPCA trainings. There's ACIS,  
16 Animal Cruelty Investigation Squad, trainings. I do  
17 have some ideas of ways the Office of Animal Welfare  
18 can hopefully work with NYPD to try to, you know,  
19 just raise awareness about the issues. But again,  
20 just follow up. You can always follow up--

21           COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] But  
22 it seems to me that ACC has a contract, and they--  
23 you know, it's a fixed amount, but there's no-- like,  
24 coming out of the pandemic, we knew that more people  
25 are surrendering their animals to ACC. That's a

1 given. You know, I spoke to President Weinstock on  
2 this and I visited the shelters, and I've seen what  
3 they're up against. I mean, they're on the same team  
4 as everyone out there. We're trying to help our pets  
5 and animals, but I just don't feel that there's  
6 enough support, and there was no think-- you know,  
7 nobody sat down apparently with-- and let's say we  
8 got to adjust the budget on this for spay and  
9 neutering, because you know, that's-- that'll help on  
10 the back end in the shelters. Once we do an  
11 aggressive spay and neutering, and the Chair  
12 mentioned this, then we wouldn't have overcrowded  
13 shelters. So, that's the investment that needs to be  
14 made, but it's the advocates that are left holding  
15 the bag, and it's sad and it keeps going on. Nothing  
16 changes. I've been doing this seven years, like I  
17 said, and even before I worked-- I have a lot of  
18 groups in my district that they give their entire  
19 basements over to rescues, and they have to now find  
20 spay and neutering or funded by raising money, but  
21 the City doesn't really help.

22  
23 DIRECTOR SILVER: And again, this is an  
24 issue that my office is very concerned-- interested  
25 in.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, you know it's  
3 a problem, but what is the Mayor doing about it?

4 DIRECTOR SILVER: Well, so we're-- I  
5 think-- I mentioned in my testimony, I can try to go  
6 back to that. but we're constantly meeting with the--  
7 - all the people we've met-- well, not all the  
8 people, but a lot of the rescuers, the individual  
9 groups, where we were trying to see how we can-- if  
10 there's anything we can do on the vet shortage, the  
11 veterinary tech shortage. If there's anything we can  
12 do, I think like the Chair said, to bring the players  
13 together-- I think a lot of it is coordination,  
14 public/private partnership, having a lot of those  
15 conversations, trying to figure that out, and I would  
16 love to have a follow-up meeting to get into the  
17 details of how--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing]  
19 Yeah, the problem isn't Department of Health is not--  
20 it's not an issue with them. It's not a serious  
21 issue. They contract with ACC and they just turn  
22 their backs.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Council Member?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: That's what I--  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
3 Council Member, we need to move on. So, if you have  
4 a specific question, ask it. I need-- there's other  
5 people want to testify and I have other Council  
6 Members that I need to ask--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] It's  
8 amazing I always get cut off. It's amazing. You  
9 know? It's like, did you see anybody else get cut  
10 off here? Thank you, Chair. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Council Member  
12 Brewer?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.  
14 First, I have a question from Council Member Susan  
15 Zhuang who had to leave. And she said, "I have two  
16 kids who love animals." This is for ACC. "I have  
17 two kids who love animals and they want pets. Does  
18 ACC have any programs with the school or Department  
19 of Education that teach children how to take care of  
20 pets in a school as classroom pets or at home?" That  
21 was the question from Council Member Zhuang.

22 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: We do have a  
23 Community Kids program, and it is really our goal to  
24 educate the next generation of pet owners, and also  
25 to bring kids into our care centers. Queens was set

1  
2 up so that we can have kids there doing things that  
3 are related to animal welfare like planting food for  
4 our rabbits. So if-- I will just reach out  
5 afterwards and connect her with our Community Kids--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I  
7 think you should do that. She would appreciate that.  
8 I have a few questions. First of all, just so you  
9 know, we have your mobile unit at our district office  
10 at 87<sup>th</sup> Street and Columbus at 12 noon and we  
11 appreciate that. Second, we just wrote a letter to  
12 all the veterinary services on the Upper West Side  
13 stating-- because this is the barrier. Can you lower  
14 the cost? This is even just trying to get the  
15 private sector to be supportive. Anybody who wants  
16 our letter, we can send it to you, but so many people  
17 have called about that issue. So, let's see if any  
18 of them are able to do that. Third, we have a  
19 meeting in November, because every week-- I'm sorry,  
20 every month we have housing lawyers, and this is  
21 going to be in pets-- housing and pets which is a  
22 huge issue for our city. What we're hearing today,  
23 though, is just-- I think a lot of these numbers, and  
24 that's what the cost is. You heard-- you know, I  
25 think eh bottom line is the City needs to allocate

1  
2 more funding for animals in our city, given the cost  
3 of sheltering an animal-- I don't know how much it  
4 is. Why don't we, maybe-- how much is it per month,  
5 that's what I'd like to know. Does it make sense to  
6 increase funding-- this is for Department of Health--  
7 for surrender protection efforts that cost a fraction  
8 of that per animal? So, how much is it per month and  
9 was it the amount that we could be or should be using  
10 for surrender prevention? This is for Health  
11 Department. How much per month is it at ACC to  
12 shelter?

13 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: The cost of  
14 surrender prevention really ranges. It could be  
15 something so simple as a food pantry which could--  
16 what would that be? A hundred dollars a month.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

18 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: for a harness or,  
19 you know, a little box, so it could be something very  
20 small.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Or it could be  
22 something--

23 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: [interposing] Or it  
24 could be something like dentistry could cost a  
25 thousand dollars. Someone just told me they took



1  
2 their pet for some basic care to a vet who was over  
3 \$600. So, it really runs the gamut depending on what  
4 the issue is, but I think that would solve a lot and  
5 we have been solving a lot with very lower-end-- just  
6 a lot of people who just need food right now.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: but how much does  
8 it cost without any of this just to have the animal  
9 in your shelter per month? Just what does it cost?

10 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: The cost of care--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]  
12 Yeah, per month.

13 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: to an animal per  
14 month? I have to get back to you. Dogs, cats are  
15 little different, but I can give you--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] The  
17 reason I'm asking is obviously the comparison, right/  
18 if it's cost-- I'm making several thousand dollars a  
19 month. I have no idea, and it's costing much less to  
20 work on much more funding for surrender protection,  
21 then we should be looking at the latter. That's what  
22 I'm saying.

23 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: I absolutely agree.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: okay. What does  
25 Health Department allocate-- I think you heard a

1  
2 little bit of this from Council Member Justin  
3 Brannan. What does the Health Department allocate to  
4 ACC in the last budget? I think we heard the \$38  
5 million. And the question is, is that adequate? In  
6 other words, we're-- I need that Department of Health  
7 to state whether or not whatever ACC gets is  
8 adequate. Now, I know OMB says don't talk, don't  
9 say, don't do nothing, I got it. But can you be  
10 little bit more honest, because there's obviously not  
11 enough funding going to this effort.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, the  
13 City's budget is just over \$34 million for ACC and it  
14 does include-- perhaps Ms. Weinstock, when she  
15 provides some of those more detailed budget  
16 information, the funding from the City does include  
17 many of the surrender prevention activities that ACC  
18 does.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: it does or does  
20 not?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: It does, and  
22 ACC also does additional private fundraising, and the  
23 Surrender Prevention Clinic which I think is going to  
24 be an incredible innovation for ACC and very helpful  
25 for people improving their ability to keep their pets

1  
2 is sent by the City. You know, I'll channel my  
3 commissioner who will always say at the budget  
4 hearings that he would never turn down additional  
5 funding, but we're not here to ask for money. But no  
6 Commissioner-- I think he says no commissioner would  
7 ever--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I  
9 know.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: turn down an  
11 offer, but we're not here to ask for resources.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, the other  
13 question is how do we end up with model of, you know,  
14 the private sector basically having to do all of this  
15 work? Is that something that you are working on  
16 extensively to think about? That would cost more  
17 money to have you do some of the work that the  
18 private sector is doing. How do you look at that?  
19 Does that come in discussions? Is there some policy  
20 change, needed, etcetera? How do you answer that?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, we have  
22 been implementing the Local Law which is the Animal  
23 Population Control fund that sets aside city funding  
24 for low-cost spay/neuter for people who meet  
25 eligibility requirements. We'd be happy to talk to

1  
2 you about ways to expand the Animal Population  
3 Control Fund.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Finally, I  
5 know you're going to meet with this Chair who's  
6 fabulous about some of these barriers. Cost is a  
7 barrier. That is a-- that barrier has to be addressed  
8 in terms of the spay/neuter, etcetera. What are--  
9 quickly-- some of the other barriers that you see  
10 that end up with so many individual animals in the  
11 shelters? What are some of the other barriers?

12 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Housing.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Housing, okay.  
14 In other words, people have the housing, they're just  
15 appropriate, or they don't have housing to be able to  
16 have their animals, is that what you're saying?

17 PRESIDENT WEINSTOCK: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, anything  
19 else? Cost? Housing? Come on, there must be  
20 others.

21 DIRECTOR SILVER: I think those are  
22 interrelated a lot. Finances can be losing a job, can  
23 be having to find a more-- you know, not funding  
24 affordable housing. I know when ACC does intake  
25 reasons, it's sometimes hard to select just one or

1  
2 two, because again, they overlap so much. You almost  
3 have to choose like what's the primary one. You know,  
4 if someone loses heir job and they have to move  
5 somewhere again it could be three different reasons.  
6 It's a cost of care for pet. It's lost job. It's  
7 moving. I'm not sure what the current categories  
8 are.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so those  
10 are not things we can necessarily address, but we can  
11 address the cost for sure.

12 DIRECTOR SILVER: Cost of care for--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I  
14 was trying to look at barriers that are the City's  
15 responsibility which would be different than an  
16 individual's responsibility.

17 DIRECTOR SILVER: Housing is a big one.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, but in  
19 other words, maybe as an example, you need some kind  
20 of care while you're moving. That's something that  
21 would be an example of able to deal with -- obviously  
22 the care is expensive also, but that would be an  
23 example to me, those of us-- I know my sister always  
24 traveling puts the dog in some kind of care while she  
25 is traveling, example. Finally, at Department of

1  
2 Health, how many people focus on this issue? Not at  
3 ACC, but at Department of Health. How many people  
4 actually focus on this issue? In addition to you.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Right.

6 Well, what I can tell you is I can't give you the  
7 agency-wide number, because there are people beyond  
8 my division and my program that focus on this, but  
9 our Office of Veterinary Public Health Services is  
10 18. There are other people around the Department.  
11 So that would be--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] So,  
13 18 people.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: 18, that  
15 would be the minimum number, but we have other people  
16 around the agency who work on animal issues.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I just  
18 want to say also my office in the district is right  
19 next to the Wild Bird Fund--

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: [interposing]  
21 yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: and we love them.  
23 Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, Council  
25 Member thank you. I have a couple of questions to

1 ask before we close out. So, I just want to get back  
2 to the wet market for a second. My understanding  
3 from our Counsel is that there are Health Code  
4 provisions under DOHMH to enforce that's specifically  
5 address the live market, so it's not just totally the  
6 state. The City's Department of Health has some  
7 responsibility there. So, is this an environmental  
8 sanitation issue that DOHMH is responsible for?  
9

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: you know, it  
11 could depend on the particular issues. So the Health  
12 Department would address nuisance conditions perhaps  
13 in the area of the Sanitation Department, could  
14 address issues out in the area, but the regulation of  
15 those markets is the state-- is under the state.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: If you would be  
17 kind enough to send us specifically what it is that  
18 DOHMH is responsible for under that, that would be  
19 very helpful. So, I-- one, I want to thank the  
20 panel, but I also just want to say that-- and I also  
21 want to say that-- I want to make a comment that ACC  
22 does the best that it can. I want to say that-- which  
23 has been told to me by a number of the organizations  
24 that are here today, but I also want to say that I am  
25 disappointed that DOHMH didn't seem to be as prepared

1  
2 as I would have liked, and so we need to get answers  
3 to a number of questions, and I also want DOHMH to  
4 really take seriously the issue of Animal Control. I  
5 think it's sort of a side issue as opposed to an  
6 upfront issue, but I want to thank everybody for  
7 testifying today. We're going to take a five-minute  
8 break and then do the public testimony. Thank you.

9 [break]

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: May I have your  
11 attention please? Keep it down. Keep it down,  
12 please. Thank you. Can everyone please have a seat?  
13 Again, can everyone please have a seat? Thank you.  
14 Again, again, keep it down, please. Keep it down.  
15 Quiet in the chambers. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, we're going  
17 to get back into session. We're going to-- thank  
18 you. We're going to do public testimony. I now open  
19 the hearing for public testimony. I want to remind  
20 members of the public that this is a government  
21 proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all  
22 times, and you've been pretty good so I have to thank  
23 you for that. As such, members of the public shall  
24 remain silent at all times. The witness table is  
25 reserved for people who wish to testify. No video



1 recording or photography is allowed from the witness  
2 table. Further, members of the public may not  
3 present audio or video recordings as testimony, but  
4 may submit transcripts of such recordings to the  
5 Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.  
6 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill  
7 out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and  
8 wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will  
9 have two minutes to speak on today's oversight topic,  
10 the state of animal rescue in New York City. I also  
11 want to let folks know we're trying to keep to the  
12 two minutes because we have over 150 people that want  
13 to testify. I want to make sure we get to everybody.  
14 We're going to be here for the long haul. If you  
15 have-- if your testimony is over two minutes, I'm  
16 going to ask you to submit it. We will read  
17 everything. It will go into the record. So, you can  
18 just give a summary and that would be great, and I  
19 want to thank everybody for being here today because  
20 this is such an important topic, and we are-- there's  
21 a lot of stuff we're going to follow up on, and I  
22 appreciate it. So, if you have a written statement  
23 or additional written testimony you wish to submit  
24 for the record, please provide a copy of that  
25

1  
2 testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. You may also  
3 email written testimony to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov)  
4 within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video  
5 recordings will not be accepted. And now I'm going  
6 to call the first panel: Michelle Villagomez,--  
7 sorry if I butcher a name or something-- Matt  
8 Goldweber, Rena LaFaille, Lucy Jatton, and Delores  
9 DeFerrari. These are all members of the ASPCA.  
10 Who's going first? Okay. You may proceed.

11 MICHELLE VILLAGOMEZ: good morning,  
12 Chairperson Schulman and members of the Health  
13 Committee. My name is Michelle Villagomez and I'm  
14 Senior Director for Government Relations for the  
15 ASPCA. Shelters across the country are full with  
16 over 6.5 million dogs and cats entering shelters last  
17 year, but only 4.8 million of them finding homes.  
18 Many shelters including ACC are facing placement  
19 challenges due to animals with longer stays, often  
20 because of complex medical or behavioral needs,  
21 ongoing staffing shortages and insufficient adoption  
22 rates. One of the most effective ways to reduce  
23 shelter overcrowding is through the implementation of  
24 comprehensive surrender prevention programs. They  
25 should include not only affordable veterinarian

1 services, but also support for pet owners facing  
2 housing instability, domestic violence or  
3 homelessness. Pet-friendly housing is a crucial  
4 component of this holistic approach. The City should  
5 work with developers, landlords, and housing  
6 authorities to increase the availability of pet-  
7 friendly apartments, particularly in affordable  
8 housing complexes. Housing laws and policies that  
9 ban pets, prohibit specific breeds, require cats to  
10 be declawed or dogs to be debarked or severely  
11 restrict pet ownership based on size should be  
12 rejected. Additionally, policies that protect  
13 tenants with pets from unfair eviction or  
14 discriminatory practices must be strengthened. We  
15 need to expand the availability of pet-friendly  
16 shelters for domestic violence victims and the  
17 homeless. By ensuring that shelters can accommodate  
18 pets, we can provide a lifeline to those in crisis  
19 while alleviating pressure on our animal shelters.  
20 Today, you will hear from my colleagues in community  
21 medicine, community engagement, and adoptions who  
22 will provide further insights into the specific  
23 programs and services the ASPCA offers to ACC, pet  
24 owners and rescue organizations. Our efforts are  
25

1  
2 designed to complement and bolster the essential work  
3 that ACC does every day. But it is important to note  
4 that ACC needs more resources and continued support  
5 from the City and the public to better meet the needs  
6 of New York City's animals. The need for affordable  
7 veterinary care, shelter resources, and comprehensive  
8 animal support far exceeds what any single  
9 organizations can deliver. We commend the committee  
10 for considering a multifaceted approach and we stand  
11 to work with the Council to make it a reality. I just  
12 want to--

13 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] You  
14 can summar-- you can--

15 MICHELLE VILLAGOMEZ: Oh, thank you. My  
16 team here is going to talk about what resources  
17 already exist, but the takeaway is it's not enough.  
18 And we're here to say you can't just rely on the  
19 rescues and on the nonprofit partners to do it, but  
20 there are some resources available and my colleagues  
21 will speak to it.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

23 DELORES DEFERRARI: Hello. My name is  
24 Delores DeFerrari, and I'm the Senior Director of  
25 Operations for the ASPCA's Community Medicine

1 Program. New York City is home to countless animal  
2 rescue organizations that tirelessly work to save the  
3 lives of pets and place them in loving homes. These  
4 organizations often staffed by dedicated volunteers  
5 are on the front lines addressing the needs of  
6 abandoned, neglected and homeless animals. The work  
7 they do is not only vital for the animals they save,  
8 but also for the broader community. One of our top  
9 priorities is to make veterinary care more accessible  
10 to underserved pet owners. Next week, we'll cut the  
11 ribbon on our new Community Veterinary Clinic in Long  
12 Island City, Queens. The Queens clinic will perform  
13 an estimated 11,000 surgeries annually and provide  
14 10,000 animals with primary pet care services. It  
15 will join the Bronx and Brooklyn clinics which opened  
16 during the pandemic and have already made a  
17 significant impact, caring for over 140,000 cats and  
18 dogs across New York City since 2020. In this time  
19 frame we've provided ACC over 10,000 free surgeries,  
20 rescues with over 71,000 free surgeries and owned  
21 pets with over 6,000 surgeries. While these numbers  
22 are significant, they only scratch the surface of the  
23 need. The demand for appointments at our clinics is  
24 overwhelming with schedules often booking within  
25

1 minutes of opening. Our Strategy and Research team  
2 estimates that an annual spay/neuter need for lower  
3 income households which is below two times the  
4 poverty level is 85,000 surgeries for dogs and cats,  
5 excluding community cats, which would be at 193,000  
6 animals. We have been deeply affected by staffing  
7 difficulties due to the national shortage of  
8 veterinarians and veterinary techs. The need far  
9 outweighs the supply, not in just term of facilities  
10 and funding, but also in terms of qualified  
11 veterinary professionals. Vets must be highly-  
12 skilled to perform high-volume, high-quality  
13 spay/neuter surgeries. We are committed to doing all  
14 that we can to support the animals and people of New  
15 York, but we can't do it alone. The need for  
16 affordable veterinary care cannot be met solely  
17 through the efforts of nonprofit organizations, no  
18 matter how dedicated or expansive their operations.  
19 We consider-- we urge the City to continue-- to  
20 consider implementing programs and policies that  
21 increase the availability of low-cost veterinary  
22 services.  
23

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.  
25

1  
2 MATT GOLDWEBER: I'm Matt Goldweber,  
3 Senior Program Manager for the ASPCA's Community  
4 Engagement team. Surrender prevention programs are  
5 of critical importance to keeping pets and people  
6 together. This work includes low-cost veterinary  
7 services, pet food assistance and behavioral support,  
8 and helps pet owners address the challenges that  
9 might otherwise lead to surrender. By investing in  
10 these programs, the City can proactively prevent the  
11 influx of animals into shelters, ultimately saving  
12 resources and lives. Our team works with pet owners  
13 and local agencies to identify solutions to keep  
14 animals in their homes when possible. The team is  
15 comprised of 11 animal welfare professionals and  
16 handles nearly 400 cases per year. In 2023, we  
17 assisted nearly 2,000 pets. We provide access to  
18 low-cost veterinary care, spay/neuter services and  
19 additional resources such as pet food and supplies  
20 and proper pet housing. Our program is a one-time  
21 voluntary service intended to provide relief to pets  
22 and owners facing hardship and educate them on pet  
23 ownership. We cannot compel people to accept our  
24 services and any assistance is provided at their  
25 request and/or our recommendation. For any pet needs

1 that fall outside the parameters of what the program  
2 can provide, we make referrals to partner  
3 organizations and agencies. In addition, we make  
4 referrals for pet owners if they have needs of their  
5 own beyond those of their pets. This can include  
6 referring them to programs that assist with services  
7 such as food assistance, pet-friendly housing, job  
8 placement and more. We work closely with the NYPD  
9 and human service providers, including domestic  
10 violence and elderly care programs. With NYPD, CE  
11 works to prevent and combat animal cruelty across the  
12 five boroughs. The ASPCA cares for animal cruelty  
13 victims by providing medical and behavioral  
14 treatment, housing and placement for these rescued  
15 animals. The ASPCA also assists criminal  
16 investigations managed by the NYPD and New York  
17 City's District Attorney's offices through forensic  
18 evaluations, legal support and training. We  
19 specifically support NYPD cruelty cases by removing  
20 animals from crime scenes and providing  
21 transportation of said animals to our 92<sup>nd</sup> Street  
22 facility where they receive the care and sheltering  
23 they need. Our program also receives case referrals  
24 from the ACC Community Pets program. Our aim is to  
25



1  
2 improve the lives of our city's pets and pet owners  
3 alike, and we look forward to continue to working  
4 with fellow animal welfare individuals and  
5 organizations to accomplish this. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, next.

7 LUCY JATON: I'm Lucy Jatton, and I'm the  
8 Manager for Training and Education of Community Cats  
9 at the ASPCA. We are here to highlight the urgent  
10 need for greater funding, access to affordable  
11 veterinary care and overall support for the  
12 organizations that dedicate themselves to helping our  
13 city's most vulnerable felines. Supporting Community  
14 Cats involves a tremendous amount of behind-the-  
15 scenes work. Our program guides the public and rescue  
16 groups on cruelty referrals and works directly with  
17 law enforcement on such cases. We provide humane  
18 education to the NYPD and NYPD Explorers supporting  
19 Community Cat work on the ground. Our program  
20 supports the community through education, training,  
21 and connections to outside resources. We offer  
22 workshops both in person and online to train  
23 community members and agencies on how to manage and  
24 care for community cats effectively. We recognize  
25 that there are very few outside resources available

1 and we urgently need more. Currently, just one  
2 person manages our Community Cats casework. Half the  
3 work is field work and case management which includes  
4 conducting site visits to assess conditions,  
5 gathering information and developing intervention  
6 plans. The remaining half is dedicated to education  
7 and training aimed at empowering the community to  
8 take proactive steps and managing Community Cats. It  
9 is important to note that the ASPCA does not directly  
10 provide trap, neuter, return monitor services. To  
11 give you a better sense of the scope of work with  
12 rescues, I'd like to share some stats. 892 rescuers  
13 are currently active with us. There are over 9,000  
14 rescuers who could become active, and in 2023 we  
15 provided appointments to 46 different organizations  
16 and 116 individual rescuers. We provide a minimum of  
17 600 free spay/neuter appointments monthly with  
18 Community Cats including appointments for pregnant  
19 cats which is significantly more than any other  
20 private organizations. This September alone, we are  
21 offering approximately 1,318 free spay/neuter spots  
22 in New York City. There have been times when fewer  
23 appointments were available. This is not because we  
24 want to provide less support or see more unaltered  
25

1  
2 community cats. It is simply because it is what our  
3 capacity allows. We have also provided funding for  
4 spay/neuter services to other groups to help bolster  
5 their efforts. We are grateful to all the rescuers  
6 who are making a difference, and we urge the Council  
7 to increase funding and access to affordable  
8 veterinary care for rescues and community cat  
9 programs across the City.

10 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

11 RENA LAFAILLE: Good afternoon. I'm Rena  
12 LaFaille, Director of Administration at the ASPCA  
13 Adoption Center. Shelters and rescues nationwide are  
14 dealing with increased intakes, limited resources,  
15 and a shortage of veterinary professionals. Despite  
16 these challenges, ACC has maintained high placement  
17 rates and continues to create programs that support  
18 both animals and pet owners. We have a unique  
19 perspective on the challenges and successes of animal  
20 welfare in our city and our partnership with ACC has  
21 been instrumental in this work. We provide ACC with  
22 grant funding for their innovative programs,  
23 spay/neuter services, and veterinary care for owned  
24 animals in underserved communities. We often  
25 transfer dogs and cats from ACC to the ASPCA Adoption

1 Center providing these animals with the specialized  
2 care they need to transition into new homes. We've  
3 provided nearly \$9.5 million in grants to ACC to  
4 advance efforts to reduce euthanasia, increase  
5 adoption and placement numbers, and improve access to  
6 care for the City's most at-risk animals. ACC  
7 established a Special Case Advocate Team funded by  
8 the ASPCA which includes two full-time staffers with  
9 social work backgrounds who work to keep people and  
10 pets together by offering resources and support to  
11 families and pets who may be temporarily separated.  
12 At the ASPCA Adoption Center and Kitten Nursey we  
13 focus on giving second chances to the most vulnerable  
14 animals and those who typically stay longer in  
15 shelters. In fact, since 2014, the Kitten Nursey has  
16 supported more than 11,000 kittens, providing life-  
17 saving care during the peak of kitten season, which  
18 is right now during the warmer seasons of the year,  
19 when shelters are overwhelmed with newborns. Many  
20 animals come to us through our valuable partnership  
21 with the NYPD from our community engagement program  
22 or transfers from ACC and often require extensive  
23 medical or behavioral rehabilitation. By providing  
24 the care they need, we help to alleviate the burden  
25

1 on ACC, giving them the chance to help more animals.  
2 So, in closing, the support of this committee and the  
3 City Council is essential in making sure that ACC and  
4 other animal welfare organizations have the necessary  
5 resources to continue their life-saving work. Thank  
6 you.  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you.  
9 Council Member Brewer, did you--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] very  
11 quickly, because I know time is of the essence. But  
12 obviously, when we asked earlier what are the  
13 barriers to having fewer individual animals in the  
14 shelters it was funding, obviously. It was housing  
15 for the person because they are losing their housing  
16 or their job. Are there any legislative or other  
17 ideas that you might have that would reduce the  
18 population?

19 MICHELLE VILLAGOMEZ: So, say, aside from  
20 funding, we should take sort of a big picture look at  
21 it, and we'd love to work with the Council to  
22 brainstorm on how to encourage and incentivize more  
23 pet-friendly housing, because when you look at the  
24 animals in our shelters and in ACC, they're over 25  
25 pounds, they're mixed-breed, and so much of the

1 housing in New York City prohibits anything over 25  
2 pounds. So automatically they've-- we're cutting off  
3 places and homes that animals could go into. So we'd  
4 be happy to speak offline about what we can do to  
5 protect tenants that are already in place with their  
6 animals and what we might be able to do to  
7 incentivize private landlords to be more pet-friendly  
8 to--  
9

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]  
11 thank you. That would be very helpful. I know,  
12 NYCHA that's an issue also.

13 MICHELLE VILLAGOMEZ: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very  
15 much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Council Member  
17 Holden?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yes. Thank you  
19 all for your work on behalf of animals, and you're  
20 doing God's work and I thank you all. Just a  
21 question-- Lucy, you just-- you mentioned about  
22 there's over 9,000 rescuers who have an account, an  
23 RSS account and could become active. What's  
24 preventing? Funding?  
25

1  
2 LUCY JATON: So, currently our capacity  
3 is such that we cannot onboard new rescuers. The  
4 rescuers that are active with us I mentioned are 892.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right. Which we-  
6 - if we had those 9,000 that would certainly help.

7 LUCY JATON: Yeah.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: How much money  
9 are we talking about? Because the Council has to  
10 know. If we're going through a budget season, how  
11 much should we allocate to the Health Department, to  
12 ACC, to your organizations, the ASPCA? How much  
13 should we do?

14 MICHELLE VILLAGOMEZ: So, sorry Lucy.  
15 I'll jump in here. So, we have that-- that 800  
16 figure is folks that have signed a rescuer agreement  
17 for this year. The 9,000 is the universe that has  
18 been and if they were to renew it could activate.  
19 One of the things that I'm going to highlight is that  
20 the funding that the ASPCA, we're one of-- we can  
21 provide low-cost spay/neuter to owned pets that comes  
22 out of that Animal Population Control Fund, but state  
23 law limits. It says it only can be owned pets of  
24 individuals on public assistance. So, unfortunately,  
25 that funding cannot be used to help rescues. So,

1  
2 that's the legal restriction on how that funding  
3 could be used. So, we would love to work with you to  
4 think about creating different sort of revenue  
5 streams that can go to help the recue community.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you. Thank  
7 you, Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Thank  
9 you, panel. We really appreciate the work that you  
10 do. Thank you. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Council  
11 Member Ariola did ask me. I'm sorry. She did want to  
12 say--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: [interposing] I  
14 also just want to thank you for the work that you do  
15 for animals and also let everyone know that our  
16 office funds two buses as does Council Member  
17 Holden's office. one is for vet clinics and the  
18 other for spay/neutering, and I invite my colleagues  
19 to really-- because it certainly isn't enough, and  
20 it's not enough time and we can't do enough animals,  
21 you know, when the buses come-- to please invest your  
22 discretionary money, your initiative money, whatever  
23 you have in these services that go out into the  
24 community and help our rescuers and help our local  
25 citizens to spay and neuter their animals and animals



1  
2 that they have trapped to be neutered and released.  
3 So, thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, now thank  
5 you, panel. Alright, the next panel is Doctor  
6 LaCheryl Ball, Natara Loose, and Matt Miller. You  
7 can proceed.

8 DOCTOR LACHERYL BALL: Hi, my name is  
9 Doctor LaCheryl Ball and I'm the Director of Surgery  
10 at Flatbush Veterinary Clinic. I have more than  
11 seven years of experience as a high-quality, high-  
12 volume spay/neuter surgeon and performed  
13 approximately 40,000 surgeries for New York City pet  
14 owners and rescuers. I greatly appreciate the Chair  
15 and the members of the committee for convening this  
16 hearing. I have worked with several spay/neuter  
17 organizations and the common thread I have observed  
18 is the passion, enthusiasm and urgency that teams  
19 across this city have doing this work. Although my  
20 colleagues and I are deeply committed to addressing  
21 the pet overpopulation crisis, we cannot do this  
22 alone. This work takes a heavy, physical and  
23 emotional toll on us. Those that have pursued  
24 spay/neuter as a career shoulder the push to do as  
25 many surgeries as we can daily, and many of my peers

1  
2 have considered permanently leaving the field after  
3 being overworked and underpaid while witnessing  
4 suffering and neglect on a daily basis, and feeling  
5 that there is not enough support for there to be end  
6 in sight, and this has led me to my greatest passion  
7 of teaching. In realizing that I may not always be  
8 able to perform 40 surgeries a day, I decided that  
9 one of my contributions to the access to care issues  
10 we face would be to arm as many veterinarians as I  
11 can with the skills to do this important work. I'm a  
12 Veterinary Training Specialist and I have trained  
13 more than 60 veterinarians so far to perform high-  
14 volume surgery. Even still we cannot tackle this  
15 crisis without long-term financial investment in the  
16 City. With your leadership and support we can ensure  
17 our colleagues receive fair compensation for  
18 providing life-saving services. We can train more  
19 veterinarians to increase spay and neuter capacity in  
20 New York City. We can open more community-based  
21 affordable veterinary clinics like Flatbush vet in  
22 every borough, and by making basic veterinary  
23 services affordable and accessible, we can  
24 dramatically reduce shelter intake, but we must act.  
25 I know that you count on us as veterinarians to

1  
2 always be there for animals and people who need our  
3 care. Well, we're counting on you, too. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

5 MATT MILLER: Good afternoon. Thank you  
6 for the opportunity to testify. I'm pleased to see  
7 so many people advocating for animals today. My name  
8 is Matt Miller. I'm a veterinarian who's been in this  
9 field for over half my life, the animal welfare field  
10 over half my life, and I've been practicing in New  
11 York City for the past five years. I'm currently  
12 serving as the veterinarian for Muddy Paws Rescue, a  
13 nonprofit canine rescue organization that has pulled  
14 over 100 dogs from the ACC this year. One of my  
15 roles at Muddy Paws Rescue is to provide free dental  
16 care, spays, neuters and other medical care for  
17 animals that-- and the care of NPR and partner  
18 organizations. Since I was 15 years old I've been  
19 involved with animal shelters and rescue  
20 organizations and I feel very fortunate to be a part  
21 of New York's animal welfare community. After all,  
22 animal welfare in the U.S. began right here with the  
23 ASPCA advocating against the mistreatment of horses  
24 in NYC in the 1860s. Here I'm able to work with  
25 compassionate people developing creative solutions to

1  
2 overpopulation and I empathize with many of the  
3 issues raised today. As an associate veterinarian  
4 when I was in general practice, I had turn away  
5 clients and their animals in need due simply to the  
6 inability to pay and it broke my heart every time.  
7 despite some of the criticisms I've heard today, I  
8 deeply appreciate the unimaginably difficult work ACC  
9 does to reduce barriers to pet ownership so adopted  
10 animals can stay in homes rather than return to  
11 shelters. And access to veterinary care is just one  
12 component to the fundamental problem here which is  
13 overpopulation. There are more animals than homes in  
14 New York City. Stray animals, of course, pose a  
15 public health risk as multiple cats have tested  
16 positive for rabies and recent years, along with  
17 parasitic and fungal infections that threaten human  
18 health. And so ultimately, for the sake of public  
19 health and to reduce the suffering of animals, stray  
20 animals must either be adopted or euthanized, and New  
21 Yorkers have shown up today to advocate for solutions  
22 that make one of those outcomes easier than the  
23 other, whether through funding high-volume spay and  
24 neuter programs or stemming the flow of animals from  
25 breeders, solutions exist. Animal welfare

1 organizations here and elsewhere have provided  
2 funding for high-volume spay and neuter operations in  
3 the form of grants, donations, and federal student  
4 loan forgiveness to recruit and retain veterinarian  
5 staff. I look forward to supporting this council as  
6 they seek to improve animal welfare and would welcome  
7 an invitation to any taskforces or programs that  
8 arise from this hearing. I have ideas with respect  
9 to public/private partnerships, the building out of  
10 low-cost medical programs, and maximizing the utility  
11 of funding toward the shared goals of everyone in  
12 this room. Thank you for your time and thank you to  
13 everyone who showed up today for animals.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

16 NATARA LOOSE: Hi, I want to thank the  
17 Council Members who are still standing here to listen  
18 to all of us here. I'm Natara Loose. I'm a  
19 veterinarian with the Neighborhood Vet and also  
20 started Small Bites Rescue during the pandemic. With  
21 the most recent corporate takeover of veterinary  
22 practices, it has significantly impacted pet  
23 ownership and animal welfare. Historically,  
24 veterinary care was provided by independent private  
25 clinics that offer personalized services at more

1  
2 accessible prices. However, as practices have been  
3 consolidated into corporate chains, the cost of  
4 veterinary services have surged leaving pet owners  
5 struggling to afford routine and emergency care.  
6 This has led to heart-breaking decisions to abandon  
7 pets on the streets or relinquish them shelters. I  
8 personally started a rescue after witnessing these  
9 countless pets being abandoned due to medical needs.  
10 Through my own clinic I was able to provide  
11 veterinary care at cost, saving numerous lives.  
12 However, even after finding loving homes for these  
13 pets, some of the adopters were forced to relinquish  
14 them due to the overwhelming cost of ongoing  
15 veterinary care. These pets should not suffer  
16 because of financial barriers. In response to the  
17 urgent need for affordable options, I've organized  
18 low-cost free spay/neuter clinics on my days off.  
19 Let me repeat, on my days off. I've also worked with  
20 organizations such as Positive Tails to help with  
21 their spay/neuter clinics as well. I shouldn't have  
22 to do this, but I see their struggle every single  
23 day. These rescues need more help. These rescue  
24 organizations are heavily burdened, taking on not  
25 just spay/neuter [inaudible] but also advanced

1  
2 medical care that many pet owners can no longer  
3 afford. This additional demands strains private more  
4 affordable vet clinics like myself which often step  
5 in to asses these rescues knowing they need our  
6 support. Unfortunately, these clinics like myself  
7 are feeling pressure battling their own constraints,  
8 leading to emotional/mental burnout among staff  
9 focusing on the quality-- delivering quality care.  
10 To combat this crisis, we must advocate for more  
11 affordable veterinary options and explore community-  
12 funded services. It's crucial that we come together,  
13 veterinarians, pet owners and community members to  
14 assure that veterinary care is accessible and  
15 sustainable for all, safeguarding the bonds between  
16 pets and their owners while promoting better animal  
17 welfare in our community.

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. I have  
19 a question for you. My understanding is that in  
20 veterinary school you don't get a lot of training in  
21 spaying and neutering. Is that correct?

22 MATT MILLER: Typically.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, so that's  
24 something that we should look at as well, yes?

25 DOCTOR LACHERYL BALL: Absolutely.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Can you explain  
3 that so that people kind of get a sense of it?

4 DOCTOR LACHERYL BALL: Typically in  
5 veterinary school students are only absolutely  
6 guaranteed to perform one full surgery throughout  
7 their four years before they graduate and go on to be  
8 practitioners in the field. They do not feel  
9 confident or experienced enough to do this work  
10 alone, and there's not enough mentorship. They need  
11 a lot more support.

12 NATARA LOOSE: In my vet-- in vet school  
13 which was quite a while ago, like 21 years ago, you  
14 had a certain number of people that basically fought  
15 for a spay/neuter clinic. So your rotation would be  
16 three weeks in which we would do like up to 20, 30  
17 spay/neuters during that time, but that would be like  
18 basically a lottery. So, if you're a fortunate  
19 enough vet student to get that, then you would get  
20 more spay/neuter experience. But my spay/neuter  
21 experience has come through Tara [sic] which was  
22 upstate, and that's where I got all my spay/neuter  
23 experience [inaudible].

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Do you want to  
25 give-- au pine on this?



1  
2 MATT MILLER: Yeah, essentially, my  
3 experience was pretty similar. I mean, I went to vet  
4 school in the south in Auburn Alabama, and there were  
5 quite a few shelters that were eagerly willing to  
6 offer up their stray animals for vet students to  
7 practice. I didn't have the same issue getting  
8 experience, but it is certainly true that you are not  
9 guaranteed much more than one surgery at most vet  
10 schools.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So maybe we can  
12 offline get together and talk about that and see what  
13 we could do about the veterinary schools to make sure  
14 that they have this available so that they train vets  
15 to do this so that we can get more done, right? Yes?

16 DOCTOR LACHERYL BALL: We would love  
17 that.

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, great.  
19 Thank you so much. Really appreciate the panel.  
20 Next panel is Rachael Ziering, Justin DeSolda, Allie  
21 Taylor-- yay Allie-- Will Zweigart-- I'm sorry if I--  
22 one is that it's hard for me to read the handwriting,  
23 and then I also don't pronounce very well either--  
24 Isabel Kle and Heidi Systo. Okay, who's going first?  
25 Yeah, okay, go ahead. Go ahead. You may begin.

1  
2 ISABEL KLE: Hello, my name is Isabel  
3 Kle, and I have been lucky enough to work with New  
4 York City animal rescues and shelters for almost a  
5 decade. I fostered 12 dogs in the past 12 months, and  
6 most of them have come through Muddy Paws Rescue from  
7 the ACC. I share my fostering and volunteer  
8 experiences on social media where I've grown a  
9 relatively large audience. Sharing these stories has  
10 been wonderful and powerful, but of course with  
11 everything there is a dark side as well. I get  
12 comments referring to the ACC as a kill shelter, and  
13 as a person who has worked with countless rescue  
14 organizations around the world, I could confidently  
15 say that this choice in words is extremely harmful  
16 and misguided. The Animal Care Centers of New York  
17 is an open intake shelter, meaning they cannot turn  
18 animals away. It is the shelter that serves the city  
19 that we all love so much. The ACC takes in every  
20 animal that comes to their doorstep. They take in  
21 strays, medical cases, owner surrenders, behavioral  
22 cases and hospice dogs. In August alone they took in  
23 1,163 animals, a staggering number. Unlike many  
24 shelters that claim to be no-kill, they don't get to  
25 choose what animals come into their care. Open intake

1  
2 shelters like the ACC are arguably the shelters that  
3 need the most support. I've had the opportunity to  
4 spend countless hours at the ACC over many, many  
5 years. What I see are staff members who work  
6 incredibly hard. They're overworked and underpaid.  
7 They're doing the best they can with the resources  
8 that they have. Every single hallway is filled with  
9 pop-up kennels and every single office has a dog.  
10 They're saving as many animals as they possibly can.  
11 I agree that something needs to be done about the  
12 animal crisis in New York City. We need more  
13 funding. We need free spay/neuter clinics. We need  
14 education about pet ownership. We need to provide  
15 resources to the organizations that are doing the  
16 work. We need to crack down on breeding regulations.  
17 The answer is not to attack the ACC, but to fix the  
18 fundamental overpopulation issue at-hand. I am so  
19 proud to support New York City's rescue organizations  
20 in a way that uplifts them to do even better, instead  
21 of shaming them for not being the absolute best.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

23 JUSTIN DESOLDA: Thank you. My name is  
24 Justin. I'm the CEO of Astoria Animal Society in  
25 Astoria, Queens. My not-for-profit animal clinic

1  
2 helps-- my not-for-profit animal clinic does low-cost  
3 spay and neuter. I roughly do about 200 a month, and  
4 we only do surgeries on Wednesdays. With the extra  
5 funding, I do believe I can help more days, more  
6 surgeries. We do see a lot of rescues coming in.  
7 It's very hard to book everybody with no funding. I  
8 come up with as much as possible out of my own pocket  
9 to help. We're understaffed. It's a big issue with  
10 the population. We have a lot of private and non-  
11 private clients that comes in, but majority is a lot  
12 of rescues and if we can get funding and help, we can  
13 actually save a lot more animals, especially we do  
14 free distemper, rabies, and FERCP [sic] for the cats  
15 and canines. That's pretty much it.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Allie?

17 ALLIE TAYLOR: good afternoon. My name  
18 is Allie Taylor and I serve as the President of  
19 Voters for Animal Rights, a volunteer-run  
20 organization based in New York City. I also  
21 dedicated my time to rescuing cats in my neighborhood  
22 in Bushwick. I want to express my sincere gratitude  
23 to Council Member Schulman, Speaker Adrienne Adams,  
24 and the Committee on Health for convening today's  
25 important hearing. And also, thank you to Council

1 Member Justin Brannan for introducing new legislation  
2 aimed at tackling the issue of backyard breeders.

3 This hearing represents a crucial opportunity for the  
4 animal rescue community to share our lived  
5 experiences and to collaborate with the City Council

6 on meaningful, pragmatic solutions for both humans  
7 and animals. Today, we will hear from

8 representatives of over 350 animal rescue  
9 organizations caring for dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea

10 pigs, wildlife and more. We will hear from community  
11 cat colony managers, veterinarians, shelter staff,

12 volunteers, and pet parents. Our collective efforts  
13 are driven by a deep commitment to our community, our

14 neighbors, and the animals we share the city with.  
15 Despite our dedication, we face significant

16 challenges. The high cost of spay/neuter procedures  
17 and vet care combined with inadequate support from

18 our city government has created a dire situation. We  
19 are urging the New York City Council to invest

20 substantial and ongoing funding for high-volume, low-  
21 cost spay/neuter services and affordable veterinary

22 care for all New Yorkers, including rescuers and pet  
23 parents. Over the past two years, many of us

24 involved in animal rescue, particularly those focused  
25

1 on cats, have been getting organized, and we've been  
2 meeting with City Council Members to advocate for  
3 accessible spay/neuter and vet care. It is  
4 surprising to many Council Members that when a  
5 constituent calls their office seeking help with  
6 stray cats, whether they are pregnant, sick, hungry,  
7 or cold, there is no city agency available to provide  
8 immediate assistance. Instead, the responsibility  
9 falls on volunteers like myself and the others  
10 present today, and this is not a knock on ACC by any  
11 means. They provide brick and mortar shelter  
12 services and many other programs, but they do not  
13 have the financial and staffing resources to go out  
14 into the field and rescue every cat or dog that needs  
15 help in that moment. Instead, consequently,  
16 constituents have three options. They can one, do  
17 nothing and allow the cat to continue suffering and  
18 reproducing on the street. They can address the  
19 issue themselves using their own resources, or three,  
20 they can reach out to numerous volunteer-run rescuers  
21 in hopes of finding help. We are an under-recognized  
22 all-volunteer workforce providing a vital municipal  
23 service without compensation, often incurring  
24 personal financial strain. This system is  
25

1  
2 unsustainable. Imagine instructing city workers to  
3 maintain clean streets and repair potholes, but  
4 without pay and with only their personal funds and  
5 equipment to use. This is the reality for animal  
6 rescue in New York City. Additionally,--

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Can  
8 you--

9 ALLIE TAYLOR: a thousand--

10 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Can  
11 you just wrap it up, please?

12 ALLIE TAYLOR: Yeah. Additionally,  
13 thousands of compassionate New Yorkers have become  
14 certified rescuers, yet due to the severe shortage  
15 they are not able to assist effectively. Expanding  
16 this service-- sorry. Currently there are only about  
17 12,000 such appointments available annually and to  
18 effectively address the outdoor cat population we  
19 need at least 100,000 appointments annually, and if  
20 we were to include low-income pet parents as well,  
21 that would be 200,000 per year. for context, New  
22 York City's Department of Health allocated only \$2.89  
23 per capita for animal care, whereas L.A. invests \$10  
24 per capita, Miami-Dade \$13.70, and Dallas, nearly  
25 \$15. The City Council can make a significant impact

1  
2 by creating incentives for veterinarians to obtain  
3 training in high-volume spay/neuter and by funding  
4 the expansion of these services across all boroughs.

5 I look forward to the day when every one of the 51  
6 City Council Districts has access to such low-cost  
7 spay/neuter and veterinary care clinics. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.  
9 Please, and I'm just going to say please keep to as  
10 close to the two minutes as possible. Appreciate it.  
11 Thank you.

12 HEIDI SYSTO: Hello, my name is Heidi  
13 Systo and for the last 15 years, I've lived in Bed-  
14 Stuy, Brooklyn. It was approximately 11 years ago  
15 that I started helping the stray cats in my  
16 neighborhood in my free time after being confronted  
17 with cats in need every time I left my house.  
18 Getting these homeless cats veterinary care,  
19 spay/neuter and adopted into homes, spending any  
20 extra time and money I had on them. Like all cat  
21 rescuers, I had a day job that had nothing to do with  
22 cats and spread myself thin juggling both my job and  
23 helping cats. It was around this time 11 years ago  
24 that I also started posting on social media,  
25 documenting the cats I was helping in my



1 neighborhood. Since then, I've rescued over a  
2 thousand cats of which almost all were originally  
3 intact. In documented this I've garnered 2.4 million  
4 followers across social media platforms, and as a  
5 result I've been able to turn rescuing cats into my  
6 fulltime job. I can say that I am one of the only  
7 New Yorkers who rescues cats as their day job. In  
8 2023, I spent over \$100,000 on veterinary care for  
9 cats which I was able to fund raise through my social  
10 media platforms, but this is not a sustainable  
11 solution. No one should have to become internet  
12 famous in order to provide what should be a city  
13 service. New York City shouldn't need social media  
14 influencers to solve this problem when there are  
15 thousands of New Yorkers who want to step up, many of  
16 whom you'll hear from today. Every day, New Yorkers  
17 want to help the cats on their block and get their  
18 pets fixed, but the resources just aren't available  
19 to do so, and as a result, the overpopulation crisis  
20 of pets gets worse every year. But we can solve this  
21 problem by having widespread access to city-funded  
22 spay and neuter. Clinics in every borough where pet  
23 owners and rescuers alike could bring pets to receive  
24 free and low-cost spay and neuter. We need your  
25

1  
2 help. We need New York City to step up and fund  
3 high-volume affordable spay and neuter. Thank you so  
4 much for your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

6 RACHAEL ZIERING: my name is Rachael  
7 Ziering, and I'm the founding Executive Director at  
8 Muddy Paws Rescue. We're a foster-based dog rescue  
9 group and we've been a New Hope partner, rescue  
10 partner, for ACC since 2017. To date, this year  
11 we've taken in over 100 dogs from ACC, 12 dogs from  
12 the ASPCA, many of whom originated at ACC, and three  
13 strays directly from the public. The majority of  
14 these dogs have been large dogs and seniors. Of the  
15 96,000 we've taken from ACC since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 15  
16 were altered prior to entering the shelter, and 23--

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] You  
18 don't have to read so quickly. You can submit-- we  
19 want to hear what you have to say.

20 RACHAEL ZIERING: I talk fast anyways,  
21 sorry.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Just summarize it  
23 so that we can get the gist of it and you can submit  
24 it, because we do--

25 RACHAEL ZIERING: [interposing] great.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: We are going to  
3 pay attention.

4 RACHAEL ZIERING: Okay. Of the 96 dogs  
5 we've taken from ACC since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 15 were  
6 altered prior to entering the shelter and the rest--  
7 23 were altered by the shelter, and the rest we  
8 altered in our care through private vet clinics or in  
9 the last few month using our own clinic. There are  
10 many reasons for this, none of which come back to a  
11 lack of care or dedication from any one individual at  
12 ACC, and most of which relate to the dog's health,  
13 scheduling and the national shortage of vets and vet  
14 techs. Theoretically, we can utilize the A for free  
15 alter surgeries, but trying to get these appointments  
16 is much like trying to get concert tickets for  
17 Backstreet Boys in the 90s. for many years we jumped  
18 through all the hoops to secure those appointments,  
19 but it wasn't sustainable, and we concluded that  
20 paying \$300 to \$700 for these alter surgeries at  
21 private vet clinics was worth it to reduce the time  
22 and energy we were putting in to trying to secure the  
23 free appointments. For a long time this meant that  
24 we had to very carefully pick and choose who we  
25 pulled from ACC and give priority to those who were

1 already altered. In march of this year, we partnered  
2 with another rescue to bring a vet on staff part-  
3 time, Doctor Miller who you had speak before, and we  
4 began doing our own surgeries in-house, and this has  
5 allowed us to say yes to far more dogs from ACC. In  
6 my opinion, these issues are far more complex than we  
7 could ever identify or address in a single hearing,  
8 and we would love to be a part of the larger scale  
9 solution to support New York City animals, whatever  
10 that might look like. That was the extent of what I  
11 had prepared for today, but I'd just like to add in  
12 response to some earlier questions about adoption  
13 processes. Muddy Paws is a huge proponent of open  
14 adoptions and utilizing technology to support open  
15 adoptions, and we'd love to be part of any taskforce  
16 or initiative related to this. We have implemented a  
17 registration process versus an application process,  
18 and while changing the verbiage isn't the only  
19 important part of this, it has made for a much more  
20 welcoming and accessible process for potential  
21 adopters. Thank you to everyone who's boots on the  
22 ground at ACC for saving lives daily, and thank you  
23 for letting me speak very quickly today.

24  
25 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you.

1  
2 WILL ZWEIGART: My name is Will Zweigart.  
3 I'm the Founder and Executive Director of Flatbush  
4 Cats. Our mission is to help reduce overcrowded  
5 animal shelters in New York City. Thank you to the  
6 Chair and Committee for this hearing. Behind every  
7 over-crowded open-admission animal shelter is a city  
8 that has not yet made basic veterinarian services  
9 like spay/neuter affordable and accessible for its  
10 residents. Affordability is the top issue for its  
11 residents. It's also the number one reason why  
12 people are surrendering their pets to shelters and  
13 why many say they will never be able to adopt again.  
14 Intakes are up. Adoptions are down, and currently  
15 less than five percent of the City's animal welfare  
16 budget supports upstream efforts like spay/neuter.  
17 We cannot rescue or adopt our way out of this crisis.  
18 So last year, with support from the public and this  
19 council, we opened Flatbush Veterinary Clinic, a  
20 nonprofit facility offering affordable spay/neuter  
21 services and preventative care for pet owners and  
22 rescuers, because spay/neuter is surrender  
23 prevention. Next year, we'll perform over 10,000  
24 affordable spay/neuter surgeries which will provide a  
25 massive benefit to reducing shelter intake. We built

1  
2 this clinic as a model to show you what is possible,  
3 because we need a minimum of 100,000 spay/neuter  
4 appointments per year to dramatically reduce intake  
5 numbers. Imagine the possibilities if we scaled  
6 community clinics like Flatbush Vet to every borough,  
7 and imagine this council as the catalyst that finally  
8 turned the tide and inspired the rest of the country  
9 to follow suit. Think of how many lives you will  
10 save and improve, because behind every city with a  
11 manageable shelter population is a group of leaders  
12 who made spay/neuter services more accessible for  
13 both pet owners and rescuers. This is a solvable  
14 problem. Let's get it done.

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. So, I  
16 have a statement and I have a question. My  
17 statement-- I went to visit Flatbush Cats, and I'm  
18 very impressed with your business model, and so I  
19 have made a commitment to bring this to the Queens  
20 delegation for next year to see if we can do  
21 something like that in Queens. So, and Council  
22 Member Ariola has agreed to partner with me, and I  
23 hope that Council Member Holden will do the same.  
24 See that? So, we're going to do that for the Queens  
25 delegation, and I urge my other colleagues as Council

1  
2 Member Ariola said earlier about an additional piece  
3 of this, that they tried to do that for their  
4 boroughs as well. The question I have is for Allie  
5 Taylor. Do you want to-- this is a softball for you.  
6 Do you want to comment on DOHMH's responses to the  
7 questions earlier today?

8 ALLIE TAYLOR: I will.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: And they have  
10 people here still.

11 ALLIE TAYLOR: Okay, that's fine.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: No, I'm saying  
13 they're here to listen.

14 ALLIE TAYLOR: I want to say that I was  
15 surprised by their lack of preparation and lack of  
16 candor, but I'm not surprised. This is a pattern  
17 that we've seen from DOH for decades. I don't believe  
18 that DOH should have oversight over ACC, because they  
19 do not care. They have shown that time and time  
20 again. it is unfathomable to me that they would show  
21 up to a City Council hearing and when asked if they  
22 want more money for spay/neuter to basically say,  
23 nah, we're good. I hope that what you say today is  
24 indicative that we absolutely need change. We need a  
25 city separate department of animal welfare that would

1  
2 house ACC and that would provide services for  
3 rescuers and pet parents that we so desperately need.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
5 much and thank you to this panel. Oh, I'm sorry,  
6 Council Member Holden.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yes, and I'd like  
8 to thank all of you. And Heidi, it's amazing what--  
9 you dedicated your life. My God, it's wonderful. And  
10 Will, if you can give us a budget that we can put in,  
11 like the Chair said, that we could spread to Queens  
12 but also the other boroughs. We need it in every  
13 borough. That's 10,000 spay and neuters. It's just  
14 amazing that you could do that many. That's what  
15 you're projecting for next year.

16 WILL ZWEIGART: That is the ASPCA's  
17 research team has estimated more than double that. I  
18 was trying to give you a number that doesn't scare  
19 you too much. We actually need over 200,000  
20 affordable spay/neuter surgeries. Trying to baby-  
21 step our way into some solutions.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: You-- I mean,  
23 that number is so encouraging that we could get to  
24 that point in every borough, or maybe a few in every  
25 borough. Then we'll finally get a handle on this.



1  
2 But I have to say this is so amazing, the advocates  
3 that we have in front of us. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you all.

5 Hydia-- I think this is what it is-- Cohen? Stewart  
6 Mitchell, Samantha Knox, Tanya Copeland, Libby Post,  
7 and Sasse Walker. You may begin.

8 TANYA COPELAND: Hi, my name is Tanya  
9 Copeland and I'm the Co-founder and President of  
10 Bronx Community Cats. We're based in the 14<sup>th</sup>  
11 Council District. We would like to thank Council  
12 Member Sanchez for supporting and recognizing our  
13 work through discretionary funding. In the last four  
14 years we've fixed over 3,600 cats, including a record  
15 1,138 in 2023 alone-- including a record 1,138 in  
16 2023 alone. We were able to accomplish this with  
17 team of diverse and motivated volunteers, primarily  
18 utilizing services provided by ASPCA, as well as a  
19 few smaller private clinics. In response to the  
20 alarming number of friendly socialized cats that  
21 we're finding in our trapping projects, we decided to  
22 allocate more resources to owned pets. Currently 30  
23 percent of the animals that we fixed every month are  
24 owned cats. When it comes to spay/neuter intensity  
25 matters, and by that I mean it's not just the total

1  
2 number of cats that we're fixing, they have to be  
3 done-- the surgeries have to be done quickly in order  
4 to derive the most benefit from it, namely prevention  
5 of reproductive cancers. The Bronx can't wait  
6 another three to five year for another nonprofit  
7 clinic. We really need innovative solutions  
8 immediately to address some of these issues. Forty  
9 percent of the pet owners in the Bronx still have  
10 unfixed cats. This is versus seven percent in  
11 Manhattan. A few of our volunteers have young  
12 children, including my cofounder who has two-year-old  
13 twins. So, we're trying to envision a future where  
14 it's not normalized to see outdoor free-roaming cats  
15 in large numbers, neglected animals, and we're hoping  
16 with the support of this council that we can see that  
17 through fruition. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next?

19 HYDIA COHEN: Good morning Council. My  
20 name is Hydia Cohen. I am the Co-founder-- I mean,  
21 I'm the Founder and CEO of Bronx Dog Haven, a  
22 nonprofit organization dedicated to resources  
23 development in Bronx community. We started off as a  
24 solicitation group in Melrose Projects. We later on  
25 gradually became what you see today which is now

1  
2 developing, rehoming, rescuing, spreading the word  
3 for spay and neutering. We also developed a pantry  
4 that we do once a month, and then we leave a month  
5 for emergency food. What we found is-- we work with  
6 people that own animals, and what we found with them  
7 is that a lot of them can't afford food or don't know  
8 that regular kibble isn't the only thing that they  
9 can feed their pets. So we teach them how to cook  
10 for the animals. We teach them other cost-efficient  
11 ways to be able to keep their pets. We also rely on  
12 sister rescues and nonprofit organizations for help  
13 to be able to get harnesses, leashes, collars, and  
14 things like that so that they are able to keep their  
15 dog safe. We also give out cages. I think our  
16 urgency is just like she said-- we deal with a lot in  
17 the Bronx, and we want to make sure that we have a  
18 lot more people that can get the help when it comes  
19 to surgeries instead of them just surrendering their  
20 pets and/or just leaving them in the projects for  
21 people like us to then pick up after we rehome,  
22 rehabilitate, and make sure that they can get the  
23 help that they need, and hopefully find a good home.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Next.  
25

1  
2                   STEWART MITCHELL: Good afternoon,  
3 Council. Thank you for letting me speak on this very  
4 important issue today. My name is Stewart Mitchell.  
5 I'm from Brooklyn, New York. I'm a single father of  
6 two teenagers, Taj [sp?] and Nasir [sp?]. I'm an  
7 author. I also visit New York City schools to talk  
8 about the importance of having compassion for animals  
9 and I share the importance of adopting animals rather  
10 than buying from breeders that cause a number of  
11 problems. I'm also an animal rights activist. I'm  
12 involved in animal rescue. That includes pigeons,  
13 cats, and other animals. I'm a cat dad. Me and my  
14 kids share our apartment with three rescue cats,  
15 Fern, Kamala, and Ali. I'm here today with many  
16 other animal advocates that include colony managers,  
17 feeders, shelter volunteers, veterinarians, and  
18 fellow pet parents, and we are here today to urge the  
19 City of New York to allocate substantial funding for  
20 high-value, low-cost spay and neuter and affordable  
21 veterinary care for anyone in need, including  
22 rescuers and pet parents, especially the many of us  
23 living in public housing. Back in 2021, my baby boy  
24 Kamala was sick with FIP which is a life-threatening  
25 disease found in cats. Most cats die within two

1 months of acquiring the disease, and death is almost  
2 certain if it's not treated promptly and effectively.  
3 I could not afford the veterinary bill, and I had to  
4 rely on friends, family and social media followers to  
5 donate money so I could pay the bill to save kamala's  
6 life. I'm very lucky and fortunate to have a strong  
7 community to rally around me and save my baby boy's  
8 life, and not everyone has that privilege and  
9 unfortunately because we live in New York where  
10 everything is overpriced from rent to grocery bills,  
11 and seemingly never-ending inflation, nobody has  
12 thousands of dollars just laying around in case of an  
13 animal emergency. And by the way, between the vet  
14 visits and the medicine for my cat, everything came  
15 out to a little over \$9,000. No parent or caretaker  
16 should have to deal with the stress of an expensive  
17 vet care bill when they already have enough on their  
18 plate to worry about like getting their rent paid,  
19 clothing our children, putting food on the table, and  
20 taking care of utility bills. Our animals mean so  
21 much to us, and this is why we are here to fight so  
22 hard for them today. Council, you have the power  
23 today to impact so many lives in a positive way,  
24 human and animal. Low-cost spay and neuter would be  
25

1  
2 such a huge relief for colony managers, feeders, and  
3 feeders who are paying for this cost out of pocket  
4 and who, by the way, are doing an extremely hard task  
5 of keeping down cat colony populations in this city  
6 due to breeders continuously breeding cats for  
7 profit, only to leave these animals to be neglected  
8 by those that purchase them and toss out into the  
9 streets to fend for themselves. Without colony  
10 managers, the city would have a major crisis and an  
11 overpopulation of cats roaming the streets, and keep  
12 in mind, these colony managers are doing this out of  
13 their own pocket and on their own free time to get  
14 these cats fed, spayed, and neutered. And lastly, I  
15 just want to say this. Cats and dogs are-- and other  
16 animals are a huge part of our family and also a huge  
17 part of our community, and low-cost spay and neuter  
18 and cracking down on backyard breeding will ensure  
19 that we can maintain happy pet homes and easy-to-  
20 manage colonies. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you, sir.  
22 Next.

23 SAMANTHA KNOX: My name is Samantha Knox  
24 and I am the Directory of Itty Bitty City Kitties  
25 based in Rockaway Beach, Queens. In the last 10

1 years, the population in Rockaway has increased over  
2 eight percent to nearly 125,000 people, one of the  
3 largest population increases in Queens. The median  
4 household income is \$66,000 which is 14 percent less  
5 than the citywide median with the poverty rate in  
6 Rockaway at over 18 percent and 14 percent of our  
7 population in public housing. Of that, 52 percent  
8 are pet parents. For all of those people there are  
9 two vets. Neither of those vets offer any low-income  
10 assistance whatsoever. The basic cost of an exam is  
11 over \$175. If you throw in spay and neuter, it's  
12 well over \$1,000 which is too much for a family who's  
13 struggling to feed their children. With no access to  
14 locally or citywide affordable vet care the animal  
15 population become unmanageable stand explodes. Pets  
16 who are problematic or sick get surrendered to an  
17 already over-burdened shelter system or abandoned,  
18 making more animals found on streets, parking lots,  
19 dumpsters, playgrounds, or I the boardwalk. It  
20 creates situations where pet parents who take in a  
21 few strays end up with more than they ask for. In  
22 January, I worked a case where a former NYPD officer  
23 couldn't afford to fix her three cats. Three cats  
24 became more than 100 in her 850-square-foot bungalow.  
25

1  
2 I worked a case with a man in Broad Channel, a  
3 veteran who couldn't afford to sterilize his pets.  
4 He had so many in his small home he started to panic  
5 and he started throwing live kittens in the trash and  
6 drowning them in Jamaica Bay. This is just the  
7 beginning. This is not the dog fights. This is not  
8 kittens used as live bait. This is not animals tied  
9 in bags found in dumpsters. I'm one person. I'm one  
10 organization, and I cannot shoulder the burden of  
11 spay/neuter for the entire peninsula of Rockaway  
12 Beach. While the wonderful Councilwoman Ariola and I  
13 have discussed options and plans for our area,  
14 neither one Council Member or one rescuer can enact  
15 these financial things without the help physically  
16 and financially of a city who can help us.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Samantha, I want  
18 to thank you for coming here today, and I have had  
19 the honor of coming to your rescue and seeing the  
20 work that you do, and if anybody ever wants to--  
21 Samantha runs an amazing show. I mean, it's an  
22 incredible place. Disabled cats, kittens, NICU, I  
23 mean it's a full gamut. She does this all from  
24 donations, and mostly from her own pocket. I would  
25 just like to ask you a question. Risa Weinstock from



1 the ACC stated under oath that every animal that  
2 leaves their care from ACC is spayed or neutered.

3 Would you say that that was your experience with ACC?

4 SAMANTHA KNOX: Our-- it is not. Our  
5 organization is part of the ACC New Hope program, and  
6 while I primarily pull kittens under age, not a  
7 single animal that we have ever pulled from the  
8 facility which is well over 100 at this point, has  
9 had any spay or neuter service or medical care or has  
10 been sent home with any medication or further follow-  
11 up.  
12

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you. Were  
14 there other in-discrepancies from the testimony that  
15 you heard from the DOHMH, Mayor's Office and ACC that  
16 kind of really stuck out in your mind?

17 SAMANTHA KNOX: Yes, especially in  
18 regards to reporting animal abuse. Both of these  
19 cases, these hoarding cases-- these, by the way, are  
20 two of the 45 cases in Rockaway Beach currently right  
21 now on my radar where there are more than 100 animals  
22 in jeopardy. We've reported them, and we are  
23 directed to 911, and they close the ticket usually in  
24 under 30 seconds with no follow-up. We have reached  
25 out to the City for assistance, and the only answer

1  
2 we get from the Mayor's office is to go to the  
3 ASPCA.org and find out resources there.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Okay. I want to  
5 thank you very much for your testimony, and--

6 SAMANTHA KNOX: [interposing] thank you,  
7 Councilwoman.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: I have a lot of  
9 recues in my district and we work very closely with  
10 all of them and they do an outstanding job, and  
11 honestly the only way, and many of you have had said  
12 it, to really combat the issue of the overpopulation  
13 and strays and feral cats and people just dumping  
14 cats off is to have them spayed and neutered. So you  
15 know what we need to work towards? Free spay and  
16 neuter for all animals in this city, not just some.  
17 If we have money to spend on things that do not  
18 benefit us, and which a lot of money is wasted here  
19 in the City, we can find the money for this and we're  
20 going to fight for that. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
22 panelist?

23 LIBBY POST: Hi, my name is Libby Post.  
24 I calm down from Albany today. I'm the Executive  
25 Director of the New York State Animal Protection

1 Federation. We represent all the animal shelters and  
2 a growing number of recues at the State Capitol.  
3 You've heard today all the reasons why the shelters  
4 are overwhelmed, so I'm not going to get into that as  
5 well, but these dynamics are beyond the control of  
6 any one shelter, but are being used to continue the  
7 demonization of shelters as some organizations  
8 promote the concept that "shelters kill animals." In  
9 2023, the animal care centers of New York who's a  
10 federation member had a live release rate as Risa  
11 said before of 91 percent. Anything over 90 percent  
12 is considered "no kill." Yet ACC is continually  
13 demonized by many as a kill shelter where animals are  
14 routinely euthanized. This organizational  
15 demonization as well as the personal attacks on  
16 shelter staff, advocates, and elected officials has  
17 to stop. We have become too inured of being able to  
18 just attack people in a way that's really destructive  
19 to them, not only the people working in shelters,  
20 managing shelters, advocates, but also our elected  
21 officials. I can tell you that in Albany there have  
22 been death threats made to elected officials if they  
23 don't vote the way some animal advocates would like  
24 them to vote, and that's just not right. But we do  
25

1 know that by working together we can make a  
2 difference. I want to thank you for holding this  
3 hearing and beginning to do the work necessary to  
4 change Local Law to comport with the statewide ban on  
5 selling puppies, kittens, and rabbits in pet stores  
6 that comes into effect this year on December 15<sup>th</sup>.  
7 The puppy mill pipeline bill was a major victory for  
8 animal welfare. We've seen other major victories in  
9 the past few years as well on the same day the  
10 Governor signed the puppy mill bill. She also signed  
11 the Companion Animal Care Standards Act for shelters  
12 and rescues which takes effect on December 15<sup>th</sup>,  
13 2025. This measure raises the standard of care  
14 across the board at all shelters and rescues. Simply  
15 put, ACC and all shelters and rescues in New York  
16 City will be inspected by the New York State  
17 Department of Ag and Markets. We have raised  
18 considerable grant funding to provide no-cost  
19 consulting services for shelters and rescues. New  
20 York Community Trust has given us funds. We have  
21 eight slots left for New York City organizations. If  
22 you are a bricks and mortar rescue or a bricks and  
23 mortar shelter, please get in touch. Go to  
24 [nysapfedfund.org](https://nysapfedfund.org) and sign up. Now, I know-- I'm  
25

1 going to be quick. The Standards Act works hand-in-  
2 hand with the Companion Animal Capital Fund. Since  
3 2018, \$33 million has been invested in capital  
4 projects at shelters across the State. ACC has gotten  
5 some of that money. Bidawe [sic] has gotten some of  
6 that money. This year we're asking the Governor to  
7 put \$10 million in. She's put \$5 million in for the  
8 last two years. Double it and we'll be very happy  
9 and be able to move on to other things. Our annual  
10 capital needs survey has found 48 shelters across the  
11 state have capital needs of \$77.2 million. While the  
12 fund doesn't cover everything, it really does help  
13 and we've seen a great deal of change. The  
14 challenges to animal welfare in the City and State  
15 are many, but there are those of us in the policy  
16 trenches that are making headway and proposing new  
17 innovations. Getting serious about increasing low-  
18 cost spay and neuter services means getting serious  
19 about dog licensing. We all know a portion of each  
20 dog license goes to the state's animal control  
21 population control fund which then funds low-cost  
22 spay and neuter programs across the state. While I  
23 can't get into it-- into specific detail right now,  
24 the federation is ready to discuss with the City  
25

1 Council in more detail outside of this context of  
2 this forum how we can enhance licensing in New York  
3 City. The other challenge we're all facing, as we've  
4 been heard, is the shortage of vets. The Fed is  
5 working with the Vet Society. We're doing a matching  
6 program to bring vets to shelters in need of those  
7 services, and that's been-- people really responded  
8 pretty well. So thank you again for the opportunity  
9 to speak today. I'm more than happy to delve into--  
10 further into these issues with you as a group or  
11 individually.

12  
13 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
14 panelist?

15 SASSEE WALKER: Hello. Hello, everyone.  
16 Hi. First I want to thank you guys so much for  
17 having this platform for us to speak. I've done this  
18 before a few years ago. Nothing came out of it, but  
19 this feels different. This feels like you guys are  
20 listening. You're asking the right questions, and I  
21 just have a really positive feeling about it. So  
22 thank you, and thank God for us all being here  
23 healthy. Big shout out to all the rescuers here that  
24 made it. I know a lot of them. So you're going to  
25 hear some great testimonies. I want to first say my

1 name is Latonya Sasse Walker, better known as  
2 Sasse. I am a one woman show. I am in Brooklyn and  
3 Brownsville area. I rescue in Canarsie and East New  
4 York. They're lower income. I'm a NYCHA resident,  
5 so I see it all, I get it all, and I feel it all. I  
6 don't have my notes because I'm too busy. Today I had  
7 to drop of cats at ASPCA. Yesterday was Cat Café,  
8 Flatbush Cats, like you know, I'm just every day,  
9 just-- and I work a fulltime job for New York City  
10 Health and Hospitals. So, I work there to support  
11 the cats, alright. I bounce so many checks. I was  
12 going to bring you my bag of all the paperwork for  
13 just this year alone so you guys could get a kick out  
14 of it, but I was rushing and I forgot it. So, I just  
15 want to say, you know, I'm coming from the heart.  
16 Like, you know, I am the cat person, the dog person,  
17 the bird person, the rabbit person. I am called every  
18 day, all day. I am so exhausted. I am so exhausted  
19 that sometimes I say I am running and leaving. I am  
20 leaving New York. I speak to people all over the  
21 worked. They have free spay/neuter. They don't go  
22 through all of this. It's like why do I have to--  
23 look, I don't even my nails done. I don't dress up.  
24 I don't go nowhere, you know. All I do is cats,  
25

1  
2 cats. People be like what you want? Cat food, cat  
3 food, anything, you know? And it's like I want a  
4 little bit of a life. I would love a little bit,  
5 just a little bit of me time, go the gym, just do  
6 something nice. So this is all I do. And I'm also  
7 the feeder. I have to help 20, 30, 40 people who  
8 feed. The elderly are my specialty. They call me  
9 for everything. I would never tell them no. I will  
10 drop whatever I'm doing, give them my lap. I also  
11 help the stray population, you know. So I'm going to  
12 sum it up and say, what, the solutions for me would  
13 be for NYCHA. I would like for them to start going  
14 back to the apartments and seeing what is being done  
15 with these dogs and the breeding that's out of  
16 control. You have to go in the apartments and see  
17 what's going on, because it is ridiculous. I am  
18 dealing with the dog-- out of control. Also, I would  
19 like to see Department of Health-- I used to-- the  
20 stores used to let me fix the cats. Now they all  
21 breeding and selling the kittens. Department of  
22 Health used to come to the stores. They used to give  
23 them tickets. Now no one wants me to even fix the  
24 cats. They got to get back on board with that. I've  
25 called millions of times. Animal cruelty department,



1 I call them all the time. I got all they numbers.  
2 I'm not seeing change. I need more help from them as  
3 well. ACC has always helped from the beginning. I've  
4 been doing this since 2011. ASPCA, they help me.  
5 They do the best they can do. We all do. We're to  
6 the max. We're maxed out. So I just want to say  
7 that and thank you. And I look forward to free  
8 spay/neuter in my hood, because they not going to Cat  
9 Café, and they not going to Flatbush Cats where I  
10 live at. You got to put it in front of their door so  
11 they can walk right out and say here, fix my pet.  
12 So, yeah. Spay/neuter, spay/neuter.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Thank  
15 you. We did-- we didn't bring it up today, but we  
16 did hear about the breeding issues, so that's a  
17 separate thing that has to be addressed. So we're  
18 aware, and staff here is taking copious notes and  
19 everything else, so. Alright. So, thank you for  
20 this panel. I'm going to call up the next panel.  
21 Marlin Rob-- you know what? We're going to take like  
22 a two-minute break, rest break.

23 [break]

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon ladies  
25 and gentlemen. Good afternoon. Please silence all

1  
2 cellphones and electronic devices. Please silence  
3 all cell phones and electronic devices. Please take  
4 your seats. We shall resume momentarily. Once  
5 again, please ensure all cell phones and electronic  
6 devices are placed on silent or vibrate. Please find  
7 your seats. We shall resume momentarily. Thank you  
8 for your cooperation.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. [gavel]

10 Okay, the next panel, Anamaria Scuric, I think it is,  
11 Victoria Koulouris. Sorry if I mispronounce. Anne  
12 Levin, Jennifer Brooks, Joan Silaco, or Joanne-- or  
13 Joan? Joan. Genuti [sic] Ahmed. Okay, you can  
14 start.

15 ANAMARIA SCURIC: Okay, thank you. My  
16 name is Anamaria Scuric and I'm with Astoria Cat  
17 Rescue. Every single day, no matter the weather,  
18 whether it's pouring rain, freezing cold, or  
19 blistering heat, we are out there feeding 15 colonies  
20 in Astoria and rescuing cats and kitties daily,  
21 providing shelter, food, and medical care, and we are  
22 struggling. There are way too many cats on the  
23 streets and not enough resources. Getting free spay  
24 and neuter services is nearly impossible. Even with  
25 regular vet care, the cost even with our rescue

1 discount are far too high for number of cats that we  
2 rescue every month. And as you know, ACC and DOH are  
3 no help. And it's not just the spay and neuter  
4 services. Many of the cats we rescue need emergency  
5 medical care, surgery, CT scans, blood transfusions,  
6 and there's nowhere affordable to take them. We walk  
7 into emergency hospitals like AC [sic] and Blue Pearl  
8 [sic] with dying cats knowing that the vet bill will  
9 be in thousands, even tens of thousands, but we don't  
10 have a choice. These animals need our help and we're  
11 the only ones trying to give it to them. And because  
12 of it, we are broke. Donations don't cover our  
13 costs. Our founder is even draining her 401K to keep  
14 the rescue alive, sacrificing her financial future  
15 because the need is so great, and not to mention, all  
16 the volunteers that are helping along the way. The  
17 reality is the current system is broken, and we're  
18 doing everything that we can, but we are at a  
19 breaking point, and this is an emergency. The City  
20 needs to act. The City Council needs to act now. We  
21 need immediate funding for high-volume free or low-  
22 cost spay and neuter, and we need affordable or low-  
23 cost emergency vet care. Without the City support  
24 rescues like ours will collapse, and these animals  
25

1 will suffer and die. And we're just not asking,  
2 we're begging. Please help us. And just to add to  
3 one of the previous points on the conversation with  
4 the Flatbush Cats, we would like to be involved in  
5 Flatbush Cat initiatives bringing in cat initiatives  
6 to Queens or anything similar to see how we can help  
7 out the best. So feel free to reach out.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, thank you  
10 very much.

11 ANAMARIA SCURIC: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Next panelist.  
13 Okay, you-- go ahead. [inaudible]

14 JOAN SILACO: [inaudible] Animal care and  
15 control, alright. What I found most distressing in  
16 all my years working there was a public that had no  
17 regard for dumping their animals and then blaming you  
18 for the killing that results from it. Decade later  
19 we still see the same problem, animals coming into  
20 the shelter that are not spayed or neutered. If all  
21 the shelter and rescue groups are spaying and  
22 neutering their animals before adoption, then where  
23 were all these intact animals coming from? Are these  
24 people-- they take a chance to adopt from a neighbor  
25 or friend, then they find out it doesn't work out, so

1  
2 they bring the animal to the nearest shelter and dump  
3 it on the street? There's no 10, 15 year commitment  
4 here. There's no time invested in the animal's  
5 future. After a week or two they are ready to give  
6 up the animal. These dogs are like foster kids. They  
7 need stability. The more times the animals are given  
8 up, the more time it needs to adjust to its new  
9 surroundings. Why is this happening decades later  
10 with no change in sight? Where are the stats that  
11 can tell you the pattern? Are these so-called owners  
12 moving into this city and they find out their new  
13 place doesn't accept animals, so now they dump them  
14 at the shelter. I know everyone used to say things  
15 like, oh, they're moving or allergic, but I know  
16 that's not the truth all the time. The reality is we  
17 cannot adopt, rescue or euthanize our way out of this  
18 problem. Years ago there were more animals but more  
19 cage space. In New York City, it all comes down to  
20 cage space, but New York City being the biggest city  
21 in the country with six animal shelters in Manhattan  
22 alone, we shouldn't be having this problem, and yet,  
23 only barely one shelter in each borough that performs  
24 animal control. We even have yard space in the  
25 Manhattan shelter, and I believe the Queens shelter

1 where animals can exercise and relieve themselves. I  
2 used to have up to 100 volunteers, and I would  
3 coordinate them and have dogs on a schedule. You can  
4 walk the dogs in the neighborhood, in the new Queens  
5 neighborhood with a dog vest saying the dog is  
6 adoptable. You can meet and greet people in your  
7 neighborhood. There's-- you have to be more  
8 creative. You're a new kid on the block. What is  
9 needed is a spay/neuter clinic. Years ago when you  
10 advocated for spay/neuter clinic, they said, oh,  
11 they're going to take the business away from local  
12 vets. I walked into a vet. It cost me \$80 plus  
13 before even doing anything. We have dog parks  
14 popping up. Where are the dogs? The shelter has to  
15 be more creative and the foot traffic-- find ways to  
16 increase adoption while at the same time decrease  
17 your animal intake. And lastly, you worry about  
18 euthanasia. Nobody knows what it's like. When I  
19 used to work at the shelter, I had a churning in my  
20 stomach every day. I had to do euthanasia. The  
21 pressure was enough, but you know, you got to save  
22 your soul. I'm trying to skip here now. TNR--

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] If  
25 you could just summarize.

1  
2 JOAN SILACO: Yeah. TNR is important.  
3 Euthanasia can't solve the problem. It's not the only  
4 solution. Basically, the bottom line is we need a  
5 spay/neuter clinic in New York City, because we are  
6 the greatest city in the world. We should not be  
7 having this problem. And like I said, six shelters  
8 in New York City alone, nothing in Queens. And I'm  
9 living here. I'm 72. I'm going to be living 65 years  
10 in the same house in Queens.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: We just opened the  
12 ACC just opened the shelter--

13 JOAN SILACO: [interposing] Yeah, yeah. I  
14 know. I know. Anyway--

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Thank  
16 you very much.

17 JOAN SILACO: Thank you for letting us  
18 speaking. I'm going to mail you.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Okay.

20 VICTORIA KOULOURIS: Hi, my name is  
21 Victoria Koulouris and I'm the President and Founder  
22 of LIC Feral Feeders and Cat Rescue Corp. We are a  
23 501C3 based in District 26 which is in Long Island  
24 City, Queens. I began feeding neighborhood cats  
25 several years ago which led me to uncover a harsh

1 reality in our city. Every construction site, empty  
2 lot and alleyway harbors colonies of homeless cats.  
3 A female cat can start reproducing as early as six  
4 months old, producing multiple litters each year.  
5 Without proper management, a small colony can quickly  
6 multiply into a large, uncontrollable population.  
7 The crisis is severe and individual rescuers and  
8 organizations cannot solve the problem alone. We are  
9 witnessing a relentless increase in abandoned pets,  
10 coinciding with rising costs for veterinary care,  
11 making the situation even more dire. We need your  
12 help. We need accessible low-cost or free  
13 spay/neuter and veterinary services. Such services  
14 must be available not just to rescue organizations  
15 but to community members who cannot afford the  
16 exorbitant cost of private veterinary care. The  
17 City's homeless cat population is a problem that  
18 demands a citywide solution. I urge you to allocate a  
19 budget to address this urgent issue and to support  
20 our efforts to manage and reduce the number of  
21 homeless cats in New York City. Thank you.

22  
23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

24 JENNIFER BROOKS: Good afternoon. My name  
25 is-- [off mic] Good afternoon. My name is Jennifer



1  
2 Brooks. I'm the Founder and President of New York  
3 City Second Chance Animal Rescue. We've been  
4 partners with Animal Care and Control since 2009.  
5 We've saved over 16,000 dogs and 5,000 cats. We just  
6 opened up a new shelter in Long Island City, Queens,  
7 our neighbors. There's a lot-- there's many  
8 problems. It's a multifaceted problem. The lack of  
9 low-cost spay and neuter for even members of the  
10 public. Our organization provides that for members  
11 of the public through our donations that we get. We  
12 also have a safety net program to try to keep  
13 families and pets together. When a medical crisis  
14 arises, we cover the medical bills for the pet  
15 owners. So there needs to be more programs like that  
16 available to the public and the City. We're just a,  
17 you know, small organization. ACC used to have a  
18 program called Safety Net. A lot of the things that  
19 they spoke about today, I don't-- as a well-versed  
20 rescuer, I was not aware of those programs that they  
21 have. Also, I am a former New York City school  
22 teacher, and I believe that humane education in the  
23 classroom is a huge issue. It's not being taught.  
24 It's in the New York City school curriculum, and it's  
25 not-- it's up to the principal if they want to do it

1  
2 or not. But unless we educate the future and give  
3 the students the tools and the information that they  
4 need, this cycle is just going to keep on going. So,  
5 there needs to be a lot of work done, and hopefully  
6 we can all come together for the animals, because  
7 they need all the help they can get.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

9 JANNATUL AHMED: Good afternoon. My name  
10 is Jannatul Ahmed, and I am the Director of  
11 Operations of Long Island City Feral Feeders. You  
12 all just heard from my amazing rescue President  
13 Victoria here, and like she said, we are a 501C3  
14 nonprofit cat rescue based in District 26 where I am  
15 also a resident. In 2020, I campaigned for a  
16 District 22 City Council candidate, and it was  
17 through that experience that a fellow campaign member  
18 introduced me to the cat overpopulation crisis in our  
19 city. When I saw the volume of cats outdoors that  
20 were living in poor conditions, sick or simply so  
21 friendly that they were begging to be brought  
22 indoors, it blew my mind that I had spent 20+ years  
23 of my life without knowing that there were so many  
24 cats out there in need of dire assistance. I assure  
25 you that there are many out there like me who still

1 need the knowledge delivered to them. And the more I  
2 learned, the more involved I got in cat rescue  
3 management. Our small but mighty team at LIC Feral  
4 Feeders has been operating at a volume unlike ever  
5 before. Volunteering our free time to help the cats  
6 and cat caretakers of our community, we are beyond  
7 overwhelmed. There are not enough resources for us  
8 to make an effective and long-lasting change,  
9 especially after the population surge that multiple  
10 veterinary clinic closure during the pandemic have  
11 led to. The current supply of subsidized veterinary  
12 services is nowhere near the demand that is out  
13 there. Council Members, I urge you to fund high-  
14 volume, no to low-cost spay and neuter services for  
15 all New Yorkers. Our community cats, owned pets, and  
16 we your hardworking constituents need greater access  
17 to veterinary services, both in cost and in quantity.  
18 Constituents should not have to take time off of work  
19 to attend appointments, consider surrendered a  
20 beloved pet due to the rising cost of care, or  
21 compete against each other for the limited services  
22 available. The number of cats on New York City  
23 streets is not normal, and our city needs to solve  
24 this problem before it spirals further out of  
25

1 control. Ultimately, practicing altruism in this  
2 city should not come at a cost. Thank you.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

5 ANNE LEVIN: Hi. My name is Anne Levin.  
6 I represent Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition  
7 which operates the Brooklyn Cat Café and the BBAWC  
8 Rescue Clinic. Today I'm going to share the numbers  
9 that show that the existing traditional shelter  
10 system that we've all been hearing about in New York  
11 City does not adequately address the needs of the  
12 city's existing cat population, despite all of our  
13 efforts. To illustrate, according to the data report  
14 of the shelter animals count, in 2023, a total of  
15 18,566 cats were taken in by participating shelters  
16 and rescue groups. This does not include the large  
17 number of cats helped by individual and small group  
18 rescues. Just over 9,500 were stray cats, in other  
19 words, removed from the outdoors. The rest were  
20 owners rehoming or transfers from other shelters.  
21 This means that in 2023 the existing New York City  
22 shelter system was able to have less than two percent  
23 of the over 500,000 cats suffering on the streets.  
24 As a city we are failing the over 500,000 outdoor  
25 cats suffering in the streets, the over 2.3 million

1 kittens born on the street each year, and over 1.7  
2 million kittens that die before they reach six months  
3 on our streets. These cats effect every single  
4 community in the city from animal lovers to residents  
5 who see the cat's nuisance behaviors and see them  
6 reproducing, starving, and suffering on their  
7 doorsteps. The traditional shelter system and  
8 current adoption rates are not and will never be  
9 sufficient to solve the New York City cat crisis for  
10 good. Individual and small group rescuers have  
11 stepped up to try and fill the gap. However, with  
12 little financial help, extremely limited access to  
13 affordable veterinary care and no municipal support,  
14 we are constantly overwhelmed by the numbers, the  
15 death and the suffering. Please hear our concerns,  
16 recognize the magnitude of the cat crisis in the city  
17 and include individual rescuers and small rescue  
18 groups in the discussion of implementation of  
19 systemic humane solutions to the New York City cat  
20 crisis.  
21

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I appreciate that.  
23 I just want to-- wait, before you go. I wanted to  
24 let everyone know that I did introduce a bill last  
25 year to educate students in school about pet

1  
2 ownership and animals and all of that, because when  
3 we had the guinea pig hearing and heard about like--  
4 guinea pigs are not the kind of animals to have as  
5 pets. It's a whole long story that if you saw some  
6 of the testimony, you'd know why, but at any rate.  
7 Teachers would bring guinea pigs into the school  
8 which terrifies them. They die from being touched  
9 and all kinds of stuff. At any rate, I put in a  
10 bill, and I have to take a look and see where it is.  
11 So we have to push it, and I may ask for some  
12 assistance there, but I'll let folks know. So I just  
13 wanted you to know that that was done, because I  
14 think it's so important. Okay, thank you very much.  
15 I'm going to call the next panel. Hold on a minute.  
16 Kathy Nizzari, Marlan Robb, David McClure, Sarah  
17 Borok, Rio Polody-- sorry if I mispronounce it-- and  
18 Edita Birnkrant. Kathy Nizzari? Oh, okay. Hi.  
19 We're missing-- who are we missing. Wait one second,  
20 we're trying to figure this out. David McClure. Oh,  
21 okay, so fine. Just I wanted to make sure we--  
22 alright. So, why don't you start, sir?

23 MARLAN ROBERTS: Can you hear me? Hello.  
24 Thank you.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: When you speak,  
3 just press the button to make sure the red light is  
4 on, and then the mic is on. Thank you.

5 MARLAN ROBERTS: Thank you. My name is  
6 Marlan Roberts and I'm the Executive Director of Best  
7 Friends Animal Society's New York City Life-saving  
8 Center in lower Manhattan. It's a privilege to be  
9 before you all today, especially after witnessing the  
10 grand opening of the Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal  
11 Care Center. The center truly exemplifies the strong  
12 commitment to its four-legged residents and their  
13 human families, and I extend my heartfelt gratitude  
14 to their dedicated staff and volunteers as well as  
15 all the organizations that support their success.  
16 Best Friends Animal Society is a leading animal  
17 welfare organization with a mission to end the  
18 killing of dogs and cats in America's shelters by  
19 2025. Our reach extends nationwide with a  
20 significant local impact here in New York City. We  
21 work with Animal Care Centers of New York City in  
22 several impactful ways. Best Friends provides  
23 \$150,000 grant to ACC New York City over a two-year  
24 period, supporting the facilitation of 650 animals  
25 annually to rescue partners to help ease their

1 capacity challenges, also known as the Wheels of Hope  
2 Program. We sponsored this year two offsite adoption  
3 events covering all adoption fees for ACC which  
4 resulted in over 100 dogs and cats finding loving  
5 homes, and we are committed to continuing this  
6 support in 2025. Additionally, we pull directly from  
7 Animal Care and Control Center's capacity to our  
8 center in New York City. I'm here today in strong  
9 support of Animal Care Centers of New York City, the  
10 largest animal shelter in our city which is on track  
11 to achieving a remarkable 90 percent save rate for  
12 the animals in their care. Despite their success,  
13 the shelter faces ongoing challenges due to the high  
14 number of animals being surrendered. Families are  
15 often forced to make the difficult decision to give  
16 up their pets due to the rising cost of living,  
17 veterinary care and other financial pressures. This  
18 situation places increased demands on ACCs and  
19 families already strained resources. With ACCs  
20 facility already at capacity, we urgently seek that  
21 the Council continue to allocate additional funding  
22 to ACCs New York City and the community-funded  
23 services. By doing so you will be supporting a vital  
24 institution dedicated to the welfare of both animals  
25



1  
2 and people and helping to make a significant positive  
3 impact in our community. Continued financial support  
4 will enable the shelter and the community to expand  
5 their services and save even more animals. Thank  
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

8 SARAH NAOMI LEWKOWICZ: Hi, my name is  
9 Sarah Naomi Lewkowicz. I'm a co-founder of 10 Lives  
10 Rescue. I'm not going to tell you stories about the  
11 rescue we've done because there's people here who are  
12 way more qualified than me to talk about that, but  
13 what I do want to talk to you about is the fact that  
14 private equities influence on the cost of veterinary  
15 care has been devastating. I heard Neighborhood Vets  
16 pointed out-- and I was really glad that they did,  
17 because it's a massive problem and it's a big reason  
18 for why this overpopulation crisis is happening.  
19 Nationwide, about a quarter of general veterinary  
20 practices are now owned by large corporations and  
21 about three-quarters of specialty practices like  
22 emergency and surgery are owned by private equity. I  
23 think from 2017 it was something like \$45 billion in  
24 deal-making was done by them, and it's New Yorker--  
25 it's Americans in general and it's New Yorkers who

1 are suffering because of this. We see a pipeline.  
2 Kitten comes from an unfixed mother, adopted into a  
3 home unfixed. Kitten reaches sexual maturity.  
4 Kitten begins spraying or gets pregnant. Kitten is  
5 dumped. Rinse and repeat. It's just-- it's constant.  
6 I have a woman who I'm working with who lives in the  
7 NYCHA housing near me, and she wants to get her cat  
8 fixed, and I asked her to make a statement. She  
9 said, "I reside in NYCHA. I'm a cat owner. I've had  
10 my cat since she was a kitten. I wanted to get her  
11 spayed, but the price was too high. I cannot afford  
12 it. I have two young children to care for.  
13 Thousands of cat owners would be grateful and happy  
14 for this." There's a need. There's a desire, and  
15 this is like a non-partisan issue. This should be  
16 really easy to knock out of the park, and there are  
17 other cities that have done it. I think we should  
18 think about forgiving veterinary loans for vets that  
19 go into this type of affordable spay and neuter. I  
20 think you should think about supplementing private  
21 vet practices that want to do this kind of work on  
22 their off time, but you can't ask them to do it out  
23 of the goodness of their hearts. You have to offer  
24 them incentives. That's all I got.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
3 much. Appreciate it.

4 EDITA BIRNKRANT: hi, my name's Edita  
5 Birnkrant and I'm the Executive Director of NYCLASS,  
6 and I want to thank you for holding this important  
7 hearing. I'll start by saying that we are in full  
8 support of Intro 1018, and as we've heard, there's a  
9 desperate need for low-cost veterinary services for  
10 New Yorkers and for widely available free or low-cost  
11 spay/neuter, and we hope to work with the Council to  
12 make this a reality. And also to make the Pets in  
13 Housing legislation a reality. We need to get to  
14 their roots of the problem, but I want to touch on  
15 another species in New York City that needs desperate  
16 rescue, and that is the carriage horses. Seventy-one  
17 percent of polled New Yorkers support ending the  
18 abuse of horse carriage business, yet, every single  
19 day right now we see senior unwell horses, many with  
20 agonizing untreated injuries and ailments pulling  
21 carriages in chaotic traffic day and night. Some  
22 crash into cars. Some collapse or drop dead on the  
23 street. In fact, this morning a few blocks away there  
24 was a trial date at the Manhattan Criminal Court  
25 House for District Attorney Alvin Bragg's prosecution

1 of long-time horse carriage owner Ian McKeever for  
2 criminal animal cruelty for working his elderly sick  
3 horse Ryder to death. And by the way, Ryder was  
4 giving a completely clean bill of health by the  
5 Department of Health and licensed to work, an  
6 elderly, cancer-ridden horse, and that's the case for  
7 many. Please Chair Schulman and the Health  
8 Committee, let's not neglect these suffering horses a  
9 minute longer. We desperately need a health  
10 committee on Ryder's Law Intro 967 so that we can  
11 finally do what the overwhelming majority of New  
12 Yorkers want. You and the City Council to do which  
13 is to shut down this criminal horse carriage abuse  
14 happening every day that is actually being enabled by  
15 the city agencies and by the City Council every day  
16 those horses are out there. Just want to take one  
17 more second to point out that Tuesday's Science  
18 Times, the cover story was about New York City's wet  
19 markets, petri dishes for a new pandemic. New York's  
20 animal wet markets with weak regulations pose a  
21 serial risk-- a serious risk for viral transmission,  
22 experts say. I worked with the report for months  
23 behind the scenes. Council Member Bob Holden is the  
24 only Council Member to ever come with me to see the  
25

1  
2 conditions in these markets that are breeding grounds  
3 for infectious diseases. We cannot turn a blind eye  
4 any longer. Please.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I appreciate it. I  
6 will tell you, the wet markets are regulated by the  
7 state for the most part and we are trying-- I don't  
8 know if you were here earlier. We are trying to  
9 figure out the-- if there's any connection for DOHMH,  
10 and we're going to be doing that offline, too. We  
11 took notes on that.

12 EDITA BIRNKRANT: That's great to hear.  
13 And please--

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Just  
15 so that you're aware.

16 EDITA BIRNKRANT: We are begging you.  
17 Every day we hear from New Yorkers why is this  
18 criminal animal abuse with these carriage horses  
19 still happening. I know you have compassion for  
20 animals. You haven't signed on to Ryder's Law. This  
21 is in your committee. It's on you every day this  
22 abuse is happening. We are begging you to do the  
23 right thing.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I appreciate it.  
25 Thank you.

1  
2 EDITA BIRNKRANT: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Next.

4 KATHY NIZZARI: good afternoon Chair

5 Schulman and members of the Health Committee. A  
6 special acknowledgement to Council Member Holden for  
7 being a true champion for animals. I'm Kathy Nizzari,  
8 Founder and Chair of Lights Out Coalition, a group of  
9 more than 50 organizations dedicated to protecting  
10 urban wildlife. We are grateful to the committee for  
11 holding this hearing on important animal issues and  
12 hope the overwhelming support for bills like the  
13 guinea pig sale ban and the rat contraception program  
14 demonstrates a positive shift in the Council towards  
15 compassion for animals. We support Intro 1018  
16 calling for regulations and protections for all  
17 animals sold in pet stores. Not only do birds and  
18 exotics need protection and proper healthcare, but we  
19 hope to see a day where these sales are also banned,  
20 especially since illegal dumping animals in public  
21 areas is so prevalent. We also appreciate that any  
22 breeder or seller must be issued a permit and look  
23 forward to the day they are outlawed as well. As for  
24 the State of New York's animal rescue, we feel free  
25 spay and neuter services as well as fully-funding

1 trap, neuter, release programs and care by the many  
2 volunteer and rescue groups in the city are necessary  
3 to reduce the-- and hopefully eliminate the practice  
4 of euthanization. Further, there is a serious need  
5 for looking at rescue more holistically or  
6 inclusively. Presently there's no city agency that  
7 will take in or attend to injured or abandoned birds  
8 and other exotics, whether it means expanding the  
9 scope of ACC or giving significant grants to Wild  
10 Bird Fund, the City's only wildlife rehabilitation  
11 center that tend to wild birds and other animals  
12 injured in parks, on the streets, by building  
13 collisions, or dumped in parks and other public  
14 locations. So many unnecessary deaths could be  
15 avoided if we all take our role as stewards more  
16 seriously. This also includes the carriage horses  
17 who have a long history of abuse. In fact,-- I'll  
18 just wrap up.

19  
20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: You can just--  
21 yeah, just sum up.

22 KATHY NIZZARI: One of the owners is  
23 presently being prosecuted by Manhattan DA for  
24 criminal abuse. The Coalition has many ideas on how  
25 the City can better protect its animals and we look

1 forward to meaningful discussions on how to achieve  
2 these goals. Thank you for the opportunity to speak  
3 today.

4  
5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
6 panelist.

7 RIO POLODY: Thank you so much for the  
8 Council, everything you're doing. My name is Rio  
9 Polody. I am an independent rescuer, animal rights  
10 advocate, and former volunteer for the Mayor's  
11 Alliance before the 2019 shift from a city-funded  
12 organization to privately run charities. I reside in  
13 District 3 and proudly voted for City Council  
14 representative and VFAR endorsed Eric Bottcher. I  
15 started doing rescue and TNR work as a child  
16 alongside my mother over 25 years ago in Fire Island.  
17 Over 50 cats have found their forever homes through  
18 our efforts, coming off the streets, getting spayed,  
19 neutered, and vaccinated on our personal time and  
20 personal dime. In my hometown of Ocean Beach, Fire  
21 Island, we had a community-run initiative by an  
22 incredible man, John Jay, where all the townspeople  
23 trapped as many cats as possible while a team of  
24 volunteer vets performed high-volume spay and neuter  
25 surgeries. After the first year, we reduced the cat



1 population by 75 percent, by the second year 90  
2 percent. TNR worked. But Fire Island is a small  
3 community and not the behemoth that New York City is,  
4 and individual rescuers are being lost and exploited  
5 in the lack of one concerted city effort. My last  
6 New York City rescue alone cost me over \$1,000 in  
7 emergency vet care and two weeks of sleepless nights  
8 of around-the-clock care. There was no city agency  
9 that could assist or provide relief, and  
10 unfortunately, I am only one of countless other  
11 advocates with the same story. It is not  
12 sustainable. The incredible people at ACC and animal  
13 heroes in this room and many other beyond have poured  
14 their blood, sweat, time, tears, and hardworking  
15 dollars into making a difference in the city that we  
16 love so much. We are strained and exhausted, but not  
17 a single one of us is ready to give up. We are just  
18 asking for help. New Yorkers deserve a high-volume,  
19 city-funded spay and neuter program. We deserve  
20 affordable vet care and vaccination programs. Bob  
21 Barker ended every program by telling us to go spay  
22 and neuter our pets, so don't let his efforts be in  
23 vain and please let us. Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
3 much. Yes, if we-- yeah. Yes, the answer is yes. I  
4 just want to keep things going, so just be brief. Go  
5 ahead.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Amazing, it's  
7 amazing. Anyway, Edita, I just want to thank you  
8 first of all for your work with the carriage horses,  
9 and all of you for your work on behalf of animals. I  
10 just want to ask Edita, regarding your complaints  
11 about-- because I know I'm always looking at your  
12 videos which are great where you're showing horses  
13 that are struggling, and you know, we had a very hot  
14 summer, very humid summer, and you kept pointing it  
15 out. Tell me your experiences with the Department of  
16 Health. Here earlier, I don't know if anybody's here  
17 representing Department of Health. But what is your  
18 experience-- they are. They're-- okay, good.  
19 That's-- we're ahead of the game. Can you tell us  
20 about your experiences not only with Department of  
21 Health when you make a complaint, but the NYPD animal  
22 cruelty?

23 EDITA BIRNKRANT: It's-- to sum it up  
24 it's a complete fiasco. That's putting it mildly.  
25 So, reporting things to the NYPD is an exercise in

1  
2 futility. The system is broken. You cannot access  
3 the Cruelty Squad directly, even if you are watching  
4 cruelty happening. You have to call 911, and then  
5 you're at the mercy of officers who through no fault  
6 of their own don't even know often that they are  
7 required to enforce the animal cruelty laws. They  
8 don't know. They're not trained in it. So you can't  
9 have a handful of officers that are only trained and  
10 the public can't access them. So it's basically a  
11 fiasco. What I do is report things through the  
12 online system. As others have said it's immediately  
13 closed, but at least you have a paper trail. But as  
14 far as the DOH saying that they're in the stables  
15 inspecting these horses-- like I said, we have  
16 cancer-ridden elderly horses where their ages were  
17 forged that are getting a clean bill of health. It's  
18 only the industry vets that are checking on these  
19 horses, and even when I send constant videos of lame,  
20 injured, horses with their ribs sticking out, we can  
21 barely get the DOH to even require their vet to check  
22 the horses out. So this is why when I say that this  
23 city is enabling and rubber-stamping the abuse,  
24 criminal abuse, of horses, this is the reality. So  
25 this is why we need to shut it down. And so we have

1  
2 a bill in this committee. I understand that there  
3 might be pushback because of union corruption with  
4 the transport workers union Local 100 representing  
5 abusive owners like Ian McKeever, the carriage  
6 drivers have no union benefits. They're being  
7 screwed over and exploited just like the horses. So,  
8 please don't let a union representing owners at the  
9 expense of workers, at the expense of horses bully  
10 you from supporting the bill that 71 percent of New  
11 Yorkers want. At least hold a hearing. The fact  
12 that, you know, Council Member Schulman, you promised  
13 to sign onto this bill. I understand maybe you're  
14 getting pressure. Not only have you not signed onto  
15 Ryder's Law, you won't even hold a hearing, as a  
16 criminal abuse trial against the business is  
17 happening a few blocks away. What is it going to  
18 take? Please.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I appreciate your  
20 comments. Thank you.

21 EDITA BIRNKRANT: Yeah, thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you. Thank  
23 you so much for that.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you to this  
25 pan--

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SARAH BOROK: [interposing] I--

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Oh,  
I'm sorry. You didn't speak.

SARAH BOROK: came in late because I was  
a little confused. So I'm-- my name is Sarah Borok,  
and I am here on behalf of Doctor Andrew Kaplan of  
City Vet. He's one of our partner vets, and I'm  
going to read his testimony. "My name is Doctor  
Andrew Kaplan and I am a licensed veterinarian in the  
State of New York with over 30 years of professional  
experience. I own a private practice on the Upper  
West Side where we provide over \$350,000 worth of  
free veterinary care every year for 35 nonprofit  
animal rescue charities. I am also the Founder and  
President of the Toby Project, a free and very low-  
cost spay and neuter service operating in the Bronx  
and Queens servicing low-income pet owners since  
2009, during which time we have performed over  
190,000 spay and neuter surgeries. The work that we  
do alongside grassroots rescuers comes from our  
hearts. We do it because we care. We are driven,  
and we will continue. However, even if they are not  
doing the actual work, most taxpayers in this city  
care as well. Additionally, our sacrifice

1  
2 financially benefits the city. More animals  
3 receiving care in my private hospital means fewer tax  
4 dollars spent on those same animals in our own  
5 municipal animal shelter. The more animals that  
6 receive spay and neuter surgeries from the Toby  
7 Project, the fewer dollars are spent on those same  
8 animals in our municipal shelters, and the fewer  
9 animals are born to perpetuate the cycle of unwanted  
10 births and unnecessary deaths. This all works, but  
11 in order for it to be truly successful, it has to  
12 scale up, and the entire responsibility cannot fall  
13 on the few private entities burning themselves out to  
14 prevent this house of cards from falling. If not  
15 from a compassion point of view, it financially  
16 benefits the City to prevent the existence of the  
17 very animals that would ultimately need medical care  
18 through a massive, well-funded spay/neuter initiative  
19 targeting low-income pet owners. This is proven in  
20 the publication by Attorney Peter Marsh, Replacing  
21 Myth with Math, using evidence-based programs to  
22 eradicate shelter overpopulation. With an ounce of  
23 prevention, this problem can be solved, and  
24 ultimately at a huge financial benefit to New York  
25 City." Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
3 much. Okay. Thank you to this panel. I have the  
4 next panel is Jonlyn Freeman, Farrah Gopp, Sara  
5 Lewkowicz-- what? Oh, okay. Marie Mundaca, Manuel  
6 Senatore, and Irina-- or Ilene Richman, I'm sorry.  
7 Okay, you may begin. Make sure the microphone's on.

8 JONLYN FREEMAN: Can you hear me?

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: yes.

10 JONLYN FREEMAN: Alright. My name is  
11 Jonlyn Freeman. I'm an independent rescuer and  
12 volunteer for Flatbush Cats and for many years I  
13 volunteered with Neighborhood Cats. I live in  
14 District 40. Rita Joseph is my Council Member, and I  
15 want to thank her for the work she did to get  
16 Flatbush Vet funded. It's an invaluable resource. I  
17 started organizing other rescuers at the end of the  
18 pandemic in the New York City Cat Rescuer Alliance.  
19 This stopped being about cats four years ago when I  
20 realized that privately-funded spay/neuter  
21 appointments were not going to resume the service  
22 levels we had before the pandemic. For me, it became  
23 about the crushing burden that rescue work has become  
24 for New York City residents, particularly in the  
25 epicenters of cat overpopulation. Low-income

1  
2 neighborhoods where low-income residents are taking  
3 it upon themselves to solve this municipal problem  
4 with their own limited money, their precious free  
5 time, working themselves to physical, mental, and  
6 emotional exhaustion. The over-reliance on private  
7 institutions to provide spay/neuter for all our needs  
8 has become a disaster for animal welfare in New York  
9 City. Only an elite few can afford the rising cost  
10 of spay/neuter. So many residents have abandoned  
11 their unfixed cats which are now reproducing outdoors  
12 in exponential numbers. Many of who wanted to focus  
13 on feral cats are now overflowing with abandoned  
14 pets. Some found too late to save or with serious  
15 injuries that need expensive veterinary care. We  
16 compete for an ever-dwindling number of rescue  
17 appointments for spay/neuter each month. We don't  
18 push this rock up a hill every summer and watch it  
19 roll back down because we're crazy. We do it because  
20 this crisis is solvable. Not every city is in a  
21 crisis. Washington D.C. and Boston invested in  
22 preventing animal welfare crisis by providing  
23 adequate spay/neuter programs to all residents. As  
24 spay/neuter availability increased, shelter intake  
25 decreased. It's that simple. It's a great relief to



1  
2 hear from City Council Members today that the ACC is  
3 over-funded. Now, that we agree on that, I'd like to  
4 hear you say that we're going to allocate funding and  
5 start city-funded spay/neuter. We're not talking  
6 about discretionary funding, \$5,000 here or \$150,000  
7 there. We're talking about a program that would get  
8 us out of this crisis, more like \$65 million or more.  
9 You short-changed us for years, driving us into debt.  
10 Will the City now pick up the tab for the public work  
11 we've been doing? Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
13 panelist.

14 FARRAH GOPP: Thank you. My name is  
15 Farrah and I'm a Co-founder of a cat rescue called  
16 Lives Rescue New York. I'm here to advocate for the  
17 city to increase the number of affordable spay/neuter  
18 services for pet owners and rescues, especially in  
19 underserved communities. We've heard a lot today  
20 about Brooklyn and the Bronx, but my rescue focuses  
21 their efforts in East Harlem and Upper Manhattan  
22 where there are absolutely no options for folks to  
23 spay or neuter their animals affordably. Uptown we  
24 joke that we are a small but determined group of  
25 dedicated animal lovers and rescuers. The nearest

1  
2 option for affordable vet care or spay and neuter  
3 services is in the Bronx, and the second nearest  
4 options are in Queens and Brooklyn, which is  
5 unfeasible for many individuals. Just two weeks ago  
6 my cofounder and I spent collectively six hours on a  
7 single day outside of our day jobs driving a car full  
8 of cats to and from their spay appointments in  
9 Brooklyn, because it was the only affordable and  
10 available option. While helpful and important, this  
11 is not a sustainable option for the thousands of  
12 individuals who live uptown and wish to care for  
13 their animals. East Harlem is also where the  
14 Manhattan ACC is located. While the new animal care  
15 centers that are opening up will offer a clinic, the  
16 existing location does not offer this. Despite the  
17 hyper local option for people to adopt a new pet,  
18 there are no affordable local options where people  
19 can take these new family members to get continuing  
20 care. The neighborhood has seen an increase in the  
21 amount of friendly dumped outside in addition to the  
22 feral cat populations. Currently, there is advocacy  
23 to implement a business improvement district in East  
24 Harlem and Upper Manhattan separately or together to  
25 help revitalize these neighborhoods, including plans

1  
2 for an affordable veterinary care center is vital to  
3 the health and development of these communities.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
5 much. Next panelist.

6 MARIE MUNDACA: Hi. My name is Marie  
7 Mundaca. I'm a volunteer with Kitty Kind, an all-  
8 volunteer cat adoption group that works with cat  
9 rescuers, colony caretakers and the general public to  
10 help get friendly cats adopted. We're also one of  
11 the only privately-run cat groups that takes cats and  
12 kittens directly from the public as opposed to  
13 sending cats to the Animal Care Center. Prior to the  
14 pandemic, Kitty Kind had standing appointments with  
15 the ASPCA for multiple spay and neuters per month at  
16 discounted rate. This took pressure off rescuers to  
17 provide pediatric [sic] spay and neuter for adoptable  
18 kittens and freed up money for feral cat populations.  
19 During the pandemic, we were informed that we would  
20 no longer have our monthly appointment. Now there  
21 are hundreds of rescuers and groups competing for a  
22 small number of spots each month. The appointments  
23 are released at 6:00 a.m. on a specific day and taken  
24 very quickly. We are now using private vets for spay  
25 and neuter, raising our monthly cost from \$5,000 to

1  
2 \$8,500 a month. Funds that were previously used to  
3 get teeth cleanings or advanced medical diagnostics  
4 for cats that came to us with medical issues are now  
5 being used for spay and neuter. We can no longer pay  
6 for vet visits for as many cats, and we cut back on  
7 the number of un-neutered kittens that we can take  
8 from rescuers. Additionally, we are seeing more  
9 owner surrenders as the price of vet care in New York  
10 increases and access to low-cost vet care decreases.  
11 Our ability to help people rehome their pets has  
12 greatly decreased. We hope that New York City can  
13 find money to fund low-cost spay and neuter and vet  
14 care for rescuers and for low-income New Yorkers.  
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
17 much. Next panelist.

18 MANUELA SENATORE: Hi. My name is  
19 Manuela Senatore and I'm a Brooklyn resident. Thank  
20 you for the opportunity to testify. This is simply a  
21 personal experience. Since moving to Bedford-  
22 Stuyvesant Brooklyn in 2014, I was surprised by the  
23 number of stray cats wondering the streets, and it  
24 wasn't long before a few curious cats-- some were  
25 friendly and some were born on the streets-- made

1 their way into my backyard. Compassion got the best  
2 of me and I began feeding them and word must have  
3 spread out in the feline community, because more cats  
4 showed up and some even were born there. Realizing  
5 the scope of the stray cat problem, I became actively  
6 involved in addressing it. In 2016 I took on the  
7 responsibility of getting these cats spayed and  
8 neutered to prevent further overpopulation, and I  
9 couldn't have done it without some of the people that  
10 are here that helped me. Over time, I managed to  
11 have some of them adopted into loving homes, but I  
12 now find myself with three indoor cats and a routine  
13 that includes feeding 15 strays in my backyard. This  
14 effort which started as an act of kindness has turned  
15 into a year's long commitment, and when I think about  
16 it, the money I've spent caring for these cats could  
17 have easily gone towards purchasing a commercial  
18 veterinary for my video [sic] business. But instead,  
19 here I am without the veterinary and with 18 cats  
20 under my care, still dedicated to making sure they're  
21 safe and healthy. The problem now is if I have to  
22 move which is probably happening soon, this is-- I  
23 don't know what to do, because you know, cats like  
24 these that are already there, they're not really  
25

1  
2 belong to the wild and nobody will want to adopt  
3 them. So, it will take like some major effort to try  
4 to solve the problem. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you so much.  
6 Next.

7 ILENE RICHMAN: Thank you, Chairperson  
8 Schulman and members of the Council. My name is  
9 Ilene Richman. In 2011, I moved to District 36, now  
10 represented by Chi Ossé, from Manhattan and I was  
11 immediately struck by the differences. Bed-Stuy, of  
12 course, had been a red-lined community that was  
13 neglected and uninvested in for decades. I saw that  
14 it was unbanked with almost no green space. I  
15 learned that it has 57 bodegas for every one  
16 supermarket with life expectancy five years lower  
17 than the City overall, and it had unhoused cats.  
18 Everywhere I looked I saw cats, and while it wasn't  
19 in the data sheets, I came to understand that the  
20 enormous population of street cats was yet another  
21 manifestation of inequity. You do not see unhoused  
22 cats running around affluent neighborhoods. People  
23 in under-resourced communities are experts in self-  
24 help. They organize to meet their own needs. As I  
25 got involved in local animal rescue, I was hugely

1  
2 impressed by how much was being done, but I also saw  
3 untapped capacity. So in the self-help tradition I  
4 created a collective call NARNCB, the Neighborhood  
5 Animal Rescue Network of Central Brooklyn. Some of  
6 our 75 members are testifying today. I wish I had  
7 time to tell you about the incredible work our  
8 members undertake about the hundreds of cats we  
9 rescue every year, about the many community members  
10 that we help, and about the tremendous toll that this  
11 work takes on us emotionally and financially. I hope  
12 that you will hear these stories today. But what I  
13 want to close with is this, it's not enough. Self-  
14 help can only go so far. The City is not investing  
15 nearly enough in animal welfare, and New Yorkers all  
16 over the city, but especially in neighborhoods like  
17 Bed-Stuy need access to free spay/neuter and  
18 affordable veterinary care, along with other  
19 approaches to make pet ownership sustainable and  
20 accessible for all.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
22 panelist.

23 COURTNEY CHANDEL: Hi, I wasn't called  
24 up, but I saw the empty chair and it was driving me  
25 crazy. I'm Courtney--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Wait,  
3 you need to be registered to speak.

4 COURTNEY CHANDEL: Oh, I'm registered.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Oh, you are, okay.

6 COURTNEY CHANDEL: yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What's your name?

8 COURTNEY CHANDEL: Courtney Chandel. I  
9 filled out-- I sent the email and I filled out a  
10 paper.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: okay, so just so  
12 everybody knows, we're doing this by panels. It's  
13 okay, you can do that. But even if there's an empty  
14 chair, we're doing this-- we have a specific grouping  
15 of--

16 COURTNEY CHANDEL: Oh, no.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: No, no, no, it's  
18 fine. It's fine. It's fine. It's fine, but just  
19 for future reference. It's fine.

20 COURTNEY CHANDEL: No, I don't mind  
21 [inaudible].

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Have you down,  
23 okay.

24 COURTNEY CHANDEL: I'm the Co-founder of  
25 Little Wanderers, the 501c3 nonprofit animal rescue



1 group who takes calls from the public for rescue of  
2 sick and injured homeless cats, as well as spay and  
3 neuter, and thank you for having all of us here  
4 today. If anyone is still under the impression that  
5 our efforts are putting animals before people,  
6 they're not. This is equally a human quality of life  
7 issue. I'm a person. All of here are people. The  
8 lack of spay and neuter resources in New York City  
9 has great impact on the lives of every citizen and  
10 volunteer rescuer in the city who cares about animals  
11 which are millions. Go into the neighborhoods. This  
12 issue crosses every demographic, class, age, gender,  
13 race, religion, even political backgrounds, and I  
14 could go on. Again, it's a human quality of life  
15 issue. And of course, this has especially the  
16 greatest impact in under-served communities. If  
17 there's enough money for art installations and  
18 flowers in the park, there's enough money for animal  
19 concerns. This is about priorities. I've been  
20 rescuing cats in the Bronx streets in the poorest  
21 congressional district in the country for the past 15  
22 years, which is hundreds of cats a year, and our vet  
23 records show that no more than five percent of the  
24 animals we pick up are spayed or neutered. These--  
25

1 while many of these cats are abandoned family cats--  
2 and come look at our vet records if you like. To  
3 answer calls for help from the public, I have to go  
4 into abandoned buildings, alleyways, parking lots,  
5 junk yards in all seasons and weather, all times of  
6 the day and night to pull out cats. This should not  
7 have to happen. But I ask you, who else is going to  
8 do it? We are in a crisis. We need affordable  
9 spay/neuter veterinary services in the City, not  
10 later, not down the road, but we need it now. The  
11 time for talk is over. The physical, emotional,  
12 mental, spiritual, and financial-- sometimes we have  
13 to raise money for \$30,000 a month on veterinary  
14 care-- toll is immense. We're people and we vote.  
15 About the horses, there was an initiative brought up  
16 a long time ago for antique cars. What happened to  
17 that? Jobs are still there. It's not about jobs.  
18 It's about something else. I'd love to know what it  
19 is?  
20

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Can you sum up  
22 your--

23 COURTNEY CHANDEL: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Because the time  
25 is-- thank you.

1  
2 COURTNEY CHANDEL: And about the abuse,  
3 we're actually have abuse on video, all kinds of  
4 proof. We know that's not going to happen ever. It  
5 has to be done a different way. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
7 much. I want to thank this panel. Okay, next panel is  
8 Dana Vacobs or Jacobs, Molly Caldwell, Rachel  
9 Poussan, Megan Salerno, Patrice Miller, Ashley  
10 Carter. Okay, first panelist, make sure the mic is  
11 on.

12 PATRICE MILLER: Thank you. Hi, my name  
13 is Patrice Miller. I'm a native New Yorker. I live  
14 in District 36 currently. I'm a cultural arts worker  
15 and an independent rescuer. In addition to  
16 everything that you've heard about our cats and dog  
17 crisis right now, I also wanted to bring forward my  
18 current experience which is that in addition to  
19 holding rescue cats in my basement and doing all  
20 those things that many people here do, my weekly  
21 happy hour at my local pub has become a bit of a  
22 drop-in for social workers, advocates, caretakers and  
23 other people who are working with the disabled and  
24 elderly community. because of the unclear pathways  
25 to reaching things like ACC or the ASPCA for care,

1  
2 people who are working regularly within the DOH who  
3 are regularly in contact with city agencies do not  
4 know what to do when their own clients or their own  
5 parents, as it were for caretakers are at a loss of  
6 veterinary services. When the kitten they brought in  
7 is starting to have kittens, etcetera. So, I've  
8 become known as that person, and at least once a week  
9 I'm sitting with my local social workers and  
10 caretakers and we are going through what options we  
11 have within the Bed-Stuy, Bushwick area. If and when  
12 hopefully we move towards a city initiative, it will  
13 not only help regular pet owners, but it will ensure  
14 that the people who are already working with our city  
15 also have clear and easy access to support their  
16 clients.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
18 panelist.

19 MOLLY CALDWELL: Hi. Thank you for  
20 having this hearing. My name is Molly Caldwell and  
21 I'm an individual rescuer in District 42 in East New  
22 York. I'm a small business owner, a home-owner and a  
23 core member of the New York City Cat Rescue Alliance  
24 that Jonlyn started. I've been doing cat rescue for  
25 over 10 years. I concentrate on my own block and my

1  
2 neighbors who need help. East New York is  
3 overflowing with cats, whether injured, skinny,  
4 pregnant, flea-ridden, dumped or sick. Unfixed cats  
5 have multiple litters a year, and those cats have  
6 more cats. The cycle continues because people are  
7 either ignorant of the spay/neuter laws, can't afford  
8 to care for or don't have access to low-cost  
9 spay/neuter and vet care, and rescuers can't keep up  
10 with the need. Over the years, I've spent thousands  
11 of dollars of my own money and countless hours caring  
12 for friendly abandoned cats and feral community cats.  
13 I'm lucky and grateful for the network of rescuers  
14 who help me when I can't manage, but I or any other  
15 private citizen shouldn't have to rely on other  
16 private citizens or private rescues to solve our  
17 city's cat crisis. There's a lot more to this  
18 conversation than the time limit allows, but a good  
19 place to start is high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter  
20 and veterinary care provided by the City. There are  
21 several organizations that spoke earlier such as  
22 Flatbush Cats who have built small neighborhood-  
23 specific, cost-efficient models that could be  
24 replicated. You have a vast wealth of experience,  
25 knowledge, and creativity right here at your

1  
2 fingertips. I urge you to use this wonderful  
3 resource to develop multiple low-cost, high-volume  
4 spay/neuter and veterinary services in all five  
5 boroughs of New York City, and I would add to that,  
6 more than one in a borough. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next.

8 RACHEL POUSSAN: Hello, my name is Rachel  
9 Poussan. I'm an independent cat rescuer, although  
10 I've done a lot of volunteering for Neighborhood Cats  
11 through the years and a few other organizations as  
12 well. I've lived in District 33. Lincoln Restler is  
13 my representative. I'm also the trap bank manager  
14 for Neighborhood Cats for those who need traps.  
15 Alright, I just want to mention a few things about  
16 this whole issue of unaffordable and unavailable vet  
17 care and spay/neuter, etcetera, etcetera, especially  
18 in regard to how it effects seniors. Here's my  
19 credential for seniors. Just remember in general,  
20 many seniors, not all, are characterized by limited  
21 or fixed income, health challenges be they mental or  
22 physical, social support issues possibly,  
23 transportation limits. So this is the backdrop. So,  
24 the problem with spay/neuter and vet costs could be  
25 forced surrender of cats that are a beloved part of

1  
2 this person's family leaving to the killing in  
3 shelters which is a horrible thing we all think of,  
4 possibly delayed spay and neutering services leading  
5 to pregnancies and those many, many kittens that  
6 cannot find homes or that die on the street at a 50  
7 to 75 percent rate. Sick cats are dead cats because  
8 of that delayed care, again. Tragedies. The extreme  
9 distress and depression developing among seniors who  
10 love their animals or who are devoted to their feral  
11 colonies that they call for, and they see the  
12 deterioration and they can't do anything about it,  
13 because they have no resources to fall back on.  
14 Seniors neglecting their own health including  
15 medications, nutrition, etcetera, etcetera, or living  
16 in worse housing because they're trying to take care  
17 of their animals and the ones outdoors as well, you  
18 know, that's how it goes. People self-sacrifice.  
19 Just a couple--

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Sure.

21 RACHEL POUSSAN: Intense loneliness and  
22 grief at loss of animals, increased morbidity and  
23 mortality in seniors, social isolations, and just a  
24 great deal of anger over the losses.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
3 much. Next panelist.

4 MEGAN SALERNO: Good afternoon. I want to  
5 start by sincerely thanking the Council for the  
6 opportunity to testify here today. My name is Megan  
7 Salerno and I'm an operations volunteer for Waggy  
8 Tail Rescue, as well as an independent cat rescuer in  
9 my neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. I'm here  
10 today to urge the Council to invest in low-cost  
11 veterinary services so that we can end the cycle of  
12 cats and kittens living and dying on our streets and  
13 in how our communities provide all animals with the  
14 care and dignity they deserve without fear of the  
15 financial burden. My time in rescue, like so many  
16 other rescuers, has been plagued by the question how  
17 much. When a neighbor found a sick and starving  
18 kitten behind their apartment, I was forced to work  
19 through how much of my savings I could part with in  
20 order to take that kitten to an emergency vet. When  
21 multiple unfixed cats made themselves at home in a  
22 local backyard, the homeowner and I nervously  
23 calculated how much it would cost to get them spayed  
24 and neutered, and when a box of kittens is found  
25 dumped in the park with a note that made it clear



1  
2 that their former owners had also been haunted by the  
3 question, how much, my rescue and I had to shoulder  
4 the time and financial commitment required to give  
5 these kittens a chance. These stories are clearly  
6 not unique to my experience. Rescuers and rescue  
7 organizations across the City are regularly having to  
8 make tough decisions about whether they can afford  
9 even the most basic vetting for the animals in their  
10 care. With low-cost vet options not being able to  
11 meet the needs of those in our city, I fear that the  
12 answer to the question how much will soon to be too  
13 much for rescuers like me who just want to make a  
14 difference. By investing in high-volume, low-cost  
15 spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care, the City  
16 Council will tackle the animal crisis in our city on  
17 multiple fronts. Low and no-cost vetting will reduce  
18 the amount of animals in our city that needs homes  
19 and care, will make pet ownership possible and  
20 sustainable for the people the Council represents and  
21 will support rescuers like me in helping as many  
22 animals as we can. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you.

24 ASHLEY CARTER: Good afternoon. Thank you  
25 for allowing us to speak on this topic. My name is

1 Ashley Carter. I've been an independent rescuer in  
2 the Bronx since 2019. My first rescue was two  
3 injured kittens I picked up from a busy intersection.  
4 Having no resources and no plan, I reached out to  
5 several city animal agencies for assistance. None  
6 could help. It wasn't until I drove an hour north  
7 out of the city that I found assistance securing  
8 medical care and loving homes for the cats. I poured  
9 hundreds of hours and over \$8,000 into tackling cat  
10 overpopulation. In rain and snow at 2:00 p.m. and  
11 2:00 a.m., I am on the streets rescuing the city's  
12 most vulnerable residents. I trap, medicate,  
13 socialize, transport, foster, feed and recover. I  
14 have no choice but to do it all. Here are just some  
15 harsh realities of what I've witnessed these animals  
16 endure in the Bronx: blistering cold, newborn kittens  
17 found frozen to death; devastating injuries, death by  
18 starvation, overwhelmed citizens attempting  
19 population control by poisoning cats, individuals  
20 keeping breeder cats and selling off their babies for  
21 \$20 a pop, reliance on private vetting pushing  
22 rescuers into financial turmoil, an increase in  
23 abandoned friendly cats, and an overall increase in  
24 birth rates all while the availability of spay/neuter  
25

1  
2 appointments and space in adoption shelters continues  
3 to decrease. And this is not just an animal issue.  
4 Rescuers rely on good-hearted New Yorkers to provide  
5 food and shelter to strays. I myself am currently  
6 holding nine cats in a 600-square-foot apartment.  
7 Members of the public come to me desperate for help.  
8 They can't get appointments and they can't afford to  
9 feed their pets and their colonies. Despite my  
10 desire to help, I've had to start turning people  
11 away. As someone currently out of work, I cannot  
12 continue to exhaust my resources solving a municipal  
13 issue, but I'm willing to continue doing so, because  
14 I know that it's the right thing to do, and I know  
15 spay/neuter works. The welfare of these animals is  
16 the City's responsibility. Volunteers shouldn't  
17 carry this burden alone simply because we did the  
18 right thing and shows these animals compassion.  
19 Without Council support for high-volume, low-cost or  
20 free vet care, this crisis will only worsen. Please  
21 help us help this city. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
23 much and thank you for all the work that you do.  
24 Next panel, Michelle Marwitz, Lisa Lamberdey-- sorry-

1  
2 - Osi Kaminer, Betty Arce, Julia Rassman, and  
3 Elizabeth Champ. You may proceed.

4 OSI KAMINER: Hello, good afternoon.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Go ahead.

6 OSI KAMINER: My name is Osi Kaminer. I  
7 represent Community Board 12 Manhattan. I'm a member  
8 of the Board and I'm the Assistant Chair for the  
9 Health and Environmental Committee. The median  
10 household income in Washington Heights, Inwood is  
11 about \$59,000, 45 percent of the residents earn less  
12 than \$50,000 a year. The average cost of spay/neuter  
13 services in New York City is anywhere around \$500 to  
14 \$1,000 per pet. The three for-profit veterinary  
15 clinics in Community Board 12 are financially out of  
16 reach for many of our district's pet owners.  
17 Consequently, many pets in our district never visit a  
18 vet for basic wellness vaccination services, let  
19 alone spay/neuter. On June 2024, Community Board 12  
20 Manhattan passed a resolution requesting that a large  
21 spay/neuter wellness and vaccination providers in the  
22 City bring back services that were shut down at the  
23 beginning of COVID, the COVID pandemic. Community  
24 Board 12 Manhattan urged ASPCA or any other larger  
25 organization to open a brick and mortar clinic in our

1 district, as it has done or is planning to do in all  
2 other boroughs, and that it provides its mobile van  
3 services in our district. We currently have zero--  
4 Manhattan has zero affordable clinic, and that's  
5 serious issue. Community Board 12 Manhattan also  
6 asks that ACC run its Surrender Prevention and food  
7 banks in our district. They're not back since the  
8 pandemic. And finally, Community Board 12 Manhattan  
9 requests that our state and city representative  
10 allocate funds for wellness and vaccination clinics  
11 for pets in our district including sponsoring a  
12 nonprofit such as the Toby Project for spay/neuter  
13 clinic. Thanks. Thank you so much.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
16 much. Next panelist.

17 BETTY ARCE: Thank you. Good afternoon  
18 and thank you for holding this hearing. My name is  
19 Betty Arce, and I am representing Bronx Tails Cat  
20 Rescue. First and foremost, I'd like to really  
21 acknowledge the work of the-- all the groups that are  
22 here today, and as well, I'd like to also acknowledge  
23 the Council Members who have shown their compassion  
24 and concern for the animals that we work with. I've  
25 been involved in animal rescue for over 20 years and

1  
2 I've been with Bronx Tails for the past 15. Bronx  
3 Tails is a nonprofit charitable organization, and we  
4 have been working with most of the cats and cat  
5 populations in the Bronx. The Bronx is one of the  
6 epicenters of the cat overpopulation in neighborhoods  
7 with low median incomes, and that is where we have  
8 focused much of our rescue efforts. Soundview,  
9 Williams Bridge, Castle Hill, Morris Heights,  
10 Claremont, and University Heights are just a few of  
11 the neighborhoods where we have been called upon to  
12 assist with cat rescue. With the increased cost of  
13 vet care and spay/neuters and the fewer spay/neuter  
14 appointments that we're able to get, we're finding  
15 that pet owners are reaching out to us asking for  
16 help in terms of being able to take care of their  
17 animals. As a result rescuers are experiencing  
18 burnout and we would like to see more services  
19 provided for spay/neuter, and what we would like to  
20 see is more city-funded, high-volume, spay/neuter  
21 services and veterinary care for rescuers and pet  
22 owners in communities of color. I'd like to see the  
23 creation of a Department of Animal Welfare within the  
24 municipal government, which would include the  
25 management of the Animal Care Center with a staff and

1 budget commensurate to address the many animal issues  
2 facing the City. And we'd like to see more funds  
3 committed for emergency response and possibly begin  
4 to do this through a taskforce that would look at and  
5 address the crisis that includes rescuers, rescue  
6 organizations and those who work closely with the  
7 rescue community. In closing, I'd like to say that  
8 I'd like to see that we-- strong leadership from the  
9 New York City should make clear to all residents that  
10 spay/neuter is not just encouraged, but required.  
11 Let's address the animal welfare crisis and make sure  
12 New York City can show its heart as a responsible  
13 municipal government that cares about animals and the  
14 people who have been at the forefront of animal  
15 rescue. Let's make city-funded spay/neuter happen in  
16 New York City. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
19 much. Next panelist?

20 MICHELLE MARWITZ: Hi. I'm Michelle  
21 Marwitz, Founder and President of Lincoln Terrace  
22 Park Cats. I first just want to say thank you so  
23 much to the Council. I've really been encouraged by  
24 the support that I've heard from you guys today. Our  
25 organization spays and neuters community cats

1 primarily through organizations like the ASPCA and  
2 Flatbush Vet when we can actually get appointments,  
3 and rescues unowned cats in district 41 around  
4 southeast Crown heights in Brooklyn where I lived for  
5 many years. I now live in District 46 in Bergen  
6 Beach, which unfortunately also has a very high  
7 number of cats on the street. And currently we're on  
8 hiatus, mostly due to extreme burnout. We  
9 unfortunately don't all have the-- don't all have  
10 Sassee's super-human powers. God bless her. Unlike  
11 typical volunteer jobs, rescue work is always on-  
12 call. There is very little time off for most of us.  
13 On top of our fulltime day jobs, we're taking cats to  
14 the vet, transporting them to foster, helping  
15 neighbors who don't want so many cats in their yard,  
16 and we finally get home after an exhausting day,  
17 there's often an urgent message about an emergency  
18 situations. Cats who have been hit by a car, cats in  
19 such poor condition that they're unable to move, or  
20 for neonatal kittens, and though our bodies are  
21 calling out for rest, the cry for help is louder. We  
22 know we're usually the only ones who can help.  
23 Neighbors often lack the skills necessary and other  
24 rescuers are just as overwhelmed as we are. So we  
25



1  
2 spend the night in the ER with the sick cat. We pick  
3 up the neonatal kittens, feeding them every three  
4 hours, and providing basic medical care because most  
5 vets aren't even qualified-- or aren't even trained  
6 in how to handle kittens that young. We're the first  
7 responders to cats, but unlike traditional first  
8 responders, our community services aren't funded by  
9 the City. There's no support for all the fires we  
10 put out. There's no coverage for all the medical  
11 care our patients require, for the vehicles often  
12 used almost exclusively for cat transport, for all  
13 the supplies we need. We have to beg over and over  
14 again on social media just to raise funds for basic  
15 care like spay/neuter and vaccines. At the very  
16 least, we desperately need city-funded high-volume,  
17 spay/neuter services and basic veterinary care for  
18 rescuers as well as pet owners. The hundreds of  
19 thousands of cats on the city streets are far more  
20 than the number of rescuers can handle, and it's not  
21 fair for this community work to fall on us. The  
22 animals on the city streets are a city problem. We  
23 cannot reduce their numbers in a meaningful capacity  
24 without the City's help. Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
3 speaker.

4 LISA LAMBERDEY: Thank you for having us  
5 today. My name is Lisa Lamberdey. I'm from south  
6 Brooklyn. I cover Gravesend, Bensonhurst, Coney  
7 Island, Dyker Heights, Midwood, and every, any other  
8 neighborhood that needs help. I have been rescuing  
9 for the past 12 years. I also handle 28 buildings  
10 which are called Marlboro Houses in Gravesend,  
11 Brooklyn. I have rescued 450 cats off the property  
12 of NYCHA which does not take responsibility. I am  
13 willing to do everything I can for the State of New  
14 York. I would like for the State of New York to start  
15 doing for us. I think every single person in this  
16 room deserves a chance not having to have to pay \$890  
17 for dental for a cat that I rescued off the street.  
18 I am on disability for the rest of my life. I have a  
19 mother who died of chemotherapy in Florida. Five  
20 months I was there, I spayed and neutered 35 cats  
21 alone in her community with a place called Operation  
22 Catnip. They do donations only. There is no paying.  
23 You make a donation. They cover the rest. We need  
24 help. And I'm serious, my district does not help at  
25 all. I am the only one in my district has been

1  
2 servicing my area for the past 12 years. I ask for  
3 some guidance. I ask for transparency. I ask that you  
4 guys come out and visit us in our communities to see  
5 what we're going through and what we're fighting.  
6 I've spent close to \$65,000 alone on bills. I work  
7 off of donations. I give on paycheck per month. I  
8 got two dogs, a seven by seven shed in my backyard  
9 with nine rescues and a crate full of kittens in my  
10 bedroom with my husband tolerating coccidia. So,  
11 we're asking for help. Please. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
13 much. Next panelist.

14 ELIZABETH CHAMP: Good afternoon. My  
15 name is Elizabeth Champ. I'm a licensed clinical  
16 social worker, and I manage Brooklyn Fat Cats, a  
17 small rescue group based in Flatbush, Brooklyn. That  
18 is District 40, and I would like to thank Member Rita  
19 Joseph for meeting with me earlier last week to  
20 discuss these issues. People are going to own pets.  
21 They're going to sneak them into NYCHA houses.  
22 They're going to hide them in no-pet apartments.  
23 People get something from animal companionship that  
24 they simply can't get from people, and they are not  
25 going to go without it. My group assists people with

1 their animals whether they're indoors or outdoors.  
2  
3 The ownership of pets is something that we are never  
4 going to be able to legislate, and spay/neuter is  
5 something that we're never going to be able to find a  
6 way or create. I believe strongly that spay/neuter  
7 is something that the City should be providing. It  
8 is the most basic medical services for the pets of  
9 our city. The majority of pet owners would like  
10 their pets to be fixed, but the current groups that  
11 provide services simply can't provide enough. Our  
12 group is constantly being asked for assistance. To  
13 those that would say just don't own pets if you can't  
14 afford them, id' like to describe my own experience  
15 of the pandemic. For days at a time my dog was the  
16 only one I saw because I live alone. Walking her,  
17 feeding her, and caring for her was what made the  
18 pandemic survivable for me. The thing is that for  
19 some people life now is not much very different than  
20 before the pandemic, and their companion animals  
21 continue to be anchors to their lives that keep them  
22 involved in their neighborhood and in their  
23 community. Please help them by providing free or  
24 low-cost spay and neuter. Thank you very much.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
3 panelist.

4 JULIA ROSMAN: My name is Julia Rosman  
5 and I represent Brooklyn Bridge animal Welfare  
6 Coalition which operates the Brooklyn Cat Café and  
7 Brooklyn Bridge Animal-- BBAWC Rescue Clinic which is  
8 a high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter clinic. Ensuring  
9 widespread access to low-cost, high-quality  
10 spay/neuter services would address the two biggest  
11 drivers of the New York City homeless cat population.  
12 First, it would prevent the birth, suffering, and  
13 early death of hundreds of thousands of kittens.  
14 Second, it would decrease the number of pets  
15 abandoned due to nuisance behavior shown by unaltered  
16 cats, such as fighting and spraying. Vet care today  
17 is unaffordable for most pet parents and rescuers.  
18 In 2020 we called every veterinary hospital in the  
19 City to find out how much they would charge to  
20 spay/neuter. The average cost of the neuter was \$480  
21 and \$540 for spay. Few offer discounts for rescuers  
22 or individuals on public assistance. Prices have  
23 only gone up since then. We were recently quoted as  
24 much as \$1,600 for a spay, over ten times what BBAWC  
25 Rescue Clinic charges for the same procedure. Cost

1 is not the only barrier. In 2020, existing high-  
2 volume, low-cost spay/neuter providers stopped  
3 providing surgeries entirely, and even now perform  
4 only a fraction of the surgery volume that is needed.  
5 Pet parents and their beloved cats are the other  
6 group that suffer the consequences of this scarcity.  
7 It's easy to demonize the people who abandon their  
8 cats on the streets, but we have met pet owners  
9 terrified of losing housing due to complaints or who  
10 cannot handle their intact cat's nuisance behaviors.  
11 Too often they release their cats outside once they  
12 reach puberty which exacerbates the already  
13 exponentially growing outdoor cat population. To  
14 effectively address the homeless cat crisis, New York  
15 City needs an estimated \$100 to \$150,000 low-cost  
16 spay/neuter surgeries to be made readily available to  
17 rescuers and pet owners each year. No singular group  
18 can achieve that alone. It can only happen with the  
19 projected collaboration among individuals, municipal  
20 and private entities. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
23 much. I want to thank this panel for your testimony.  
24 Thank you so much. Okay, next panel is Elizabeth  
25 Powers, Erica Kubersky, Christina Liew, Meagan

1  
2 Licari, Lynn Pacifico, Rebecca Wisdom. Ready? You  
3 begin. Is the-- the light's on?

4 ELIZABETH POWERS: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay.

6 ELIZABETH POWERS: Hi. Thank you so much  
7 for the opportunity to speak. Thank you for having  
8 this hearing. My name is Beth Powers. I'm a Board  
9 Member with Positive Tails. Positive Tails is a  
10 nonprofit organization founded to improve both animal  
11 and community welfare in New York City. We fund  
12 emergency veterinary care for those who can't afford  
13 treatment. We host veterinary clinics for people who  
14 don't have access to veterinary care, and we provide  
15 follow-up spay/neuter services. Through our clinics  
16 we've seen firsthand the incredible demand for  
17 affordable veterinary services, the desire for spay  
18 and neuter services, and the length people will go in  
19 order to obtain affordable care. They will travel  
20 all over the city. They will arrive at 5:00 a.m.  
21 They'll do whatever it takes if they have access to  
22 this care. Many common diseases and emergencies that  
23 we see could be prevented with routine care and low-  
24 cost spay/neuter. And I want to give you just a few  
25 examples from clinics that we've had. We recently

1 met a family who brought their puppy to a clinic who  
2 was extremely lethargic and was immediately flagged  
3 as a pretty-- in pretty serious condition, was sent  
4 to a veterinary partner where she was diagnosed with  
5 Parvo which is likely to result in death if  
6 untreated. Parvo can be vaccinated against. A  
7 vaccine can cost \$40 at a private clinic. Treating  
8 it can cost thousands, but we were able to help the  
9 family out and happy to say the puppy survived.  
10 Another common preventable life-threatening condition  
11 that we see is pyometra which is an infected uterus  
12 which is also likely to result in death if untreated.  
13 We had a client recently who was lethargic and had no  
14 appetite and her family rushed her to the vet. We  
15 were able to help them cover the cost of the  
16 emergency service, but pyometras are 100 percent  
17 avoidable if your pet is spayed, and 20 to 25 percent  
18 of intact females will suffer a pyometra before  
19 they're 10. Unfortunately, the cost of spay, as  
20 you've heard today is out of reach for many, and the  
21 cost of an emergency pyometra is significantly more  
22 than the cost of a spay. And I mean, as a small  
23 volunteer-run nonprofit we have a limited reach  
24 compared to the outsized need in the City. As you've  
25



1  
2 heard, investing in veterinary care like spay and  
3 neuter is significantly more cost-effective, prevents  
4 families from making heartbreaking decisions and  
5 relieves the City's overtaxed shelters. So thank you  
6 and we urge you to support families by funding spay  
7 and neuter and wellness services.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
9 panelist.

10 ERICA KUBERSKY: Hi. My name is Erica  
11 Kubersky. I am also with Positive Tails, and I am  
12 reading a letter from one of our veterinarians that  
13 we work with. "My name is Justin Lamb [sp?]. I'm a  
14 veterinarian at a private practice in Manhattan. I  
15 am also the Medical Director of the Positive Tails  
16 Street Clinics where we see hundreds of families, and  
17 for many we are their only access to care. We  
18 provide the service free of cost, and Positive Tails  
19 in 2023 has provided close to \$200,000 of veterinary  
20 care without any public funding. At our clinics, the  
21 need seems to be so great that we are forced to turn  
22 away hundreds of families with the promise that we'll  
23 be back as soon as we can, but it is never soon  
24 enough. We've had the chance to catch emergencies  
25 where the animal certainly would have died if they

1  
2 did not attend a clinic, and while I'm so relieved  
3 for these wins, I know we are not seeing all of them.  
4 Of all the attendees, I would say at least 75 percent  
5 are requesting spay/neuter. As a veterinarian I know  
6 the best thing medically we can do for these families  
7 is spay and neuter their companion animals, but we  
8 simply can't do them all. The dedication of our  
9 medical and non-medical volunteers is inspiring, but  
10 frankly it shouldn't be our burden alone, nor should  
11 it be the burden of the other nonprofits we've been  
12 so lucky-- sitting here we've been so lucky to  
13 collaborate with. We are always going to be limited  
14 by the budget of our nonprofit and the number of  
15 facilities that we can work with, but just to be  
16 clear, we have no plans of walking away from this  
17 work, we just need the City as a partner. Over 50  
18 percent of all households in New York City have  
19 companion animals, so this is not something that  
20 affects some. It affects many. I believe strongly  
21 that the City should be providing more resources to  
22 their residents, because I think our common goal is  
23 to keep companion animals healthy, prevent them from  
24 entering our overburdened shelter, and to always keep  
25 families together."

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Next panelist.

Sorry.

CHRISTINA LIEW: Good afternoon. My name is Christina and I am an independent rescuer and a colony caretaker from Gravesend, Brooklyn in District 47. I began rescuing cats after the pandemic when I saw the alarming number of stray and abandoned cats in my neighborhood. What began as a simple effort to help has become a significant part of my life, but it's important to emphasize that this is volunteer work, not my fulltime job. Like many other individual rescuers, I do this out of compassion on top of my other responsibilities. While the City has made strides in animal welfare, the reality is that there are limited low-cost spay and neuter programs available. This gap leaves rescuers, many of whom are working on their own and paying out of pocket, with an overwhelming financial strain. Spaying and neutering is essential to managing the population of community cats, but without affordable resources, it's difficult to keep up. The cost of procedures, medication, ongoing care quickly pile up, leaving rescuers financially strained. In addition, we are taking responsibility for the care of abandoned

1 friendly cats, former pets left behind to fend for  
2 themselves. These animals require urgent help, but  
3 the financial burden of caring for them falls heavily  
4 on individual rescuers like myself with limited  
5 resources. I urge the City Council to fund high-  
6 volume, no to low-cost spay and neuter services and  
7 provide more support to rescuers and pet owners in  
8 the city. Community cats and abandoned pets need  
9 care, and individuals like myself who are stepping to  
10 assist are doing our best, but we need more support.  
11 This would not only help individual rescuers but also  
12 improve the overall quality of life for both the  
13 animals and our communities. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
15 panelist.

16 PORSCHE JONES: Good afternoon. My name  
17 is Porsche Jones. I'm a former client and current  
18 volunteer. I wanted to take the opportunity to tell  
19 you my story as someone who comes from the community  
20 that is affected by the lack of affordable resources  
21 for vet care-- for pet care. As a trans woman and  
22 member of the LGBT community, having a dog to me  
23 means having a child. I put everything into caring  
24 for him as a mother would, and that means doing  
25

1  
2 everything I can to prolong its life and ensure he  
3 will receive all most important preventive care  
4 necessary. I come from an undeserved community that  
5 is deprived of the resources needed to take care of  
6 our fur baby, and what I've learned is that also  
7 means we get further from assets to the education  
8 that comes from having those resources within reach.  
9 It wasn't until I came across a wonderful  
10 organization called Positive Tails that I was able to  
11 learn more about what I needed to care for my first  
12 baby Machiavelli, and thank God for them. They were  
13 able to provide me with the financial support to do  
14 so. I was so moved by how much they did for my fur  
15 baby and how much they taught me about his needs that  
16 I immediately wanted to spread the word among my  
17 friends, among their-- about their services. I would  
18 share the details of their pop-up veterinarian  
19 clinics, and my friends would arrive with their fur  
20 babies and wait sometimes up to five hours to receive  
21 the benefits their free veterinarian clinics offered.  
22 Little by little I also see my community changing  
23 their attitudes towards animal care as they begin to  
24 see how these services impacted their animals and  
25 them, but the problem is there's only one Positive

1  
2 Tail and their resources and time is so limited, and  
3 the problems that we need hundreds and hundreds of  
4 them. At a time when living and surviving is become  
5 almost impossible for so many, it is our children  
6 that get us through our hardships. Please help us  
7 prolong their lives. Please unburden the shelters by  
8 investing in more resources for families that want to  
9 keep their children. Please help.

10 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: thank you very  
11 much. Next panelist.

12 MEAGAN LICARI: Thank you, Chairwoman and  
13 Council Members, for your time and attention to this  
14 matter. My name is Meagan Licari and I run Puppy  
15 Kitty New York City. As one of the large privately-  
16 run rescues here in NYC, I can promise you there is  
17 only one clear solution to an overpopulation crisis,  
18 and that is high-volume, low-cost city-funded spay  
19 and neuter. My organization has 432 cats which is  
20 the highest number we have ever had since our  
21 founding 10 years ago. While that number might not  
22 seem high to you, it's an overwhelming number for a  
23 group run mainly by volunteers. Ninety-nine percent  
24 of the cats we take in are not spayed or neutered.  
25 Dogs and cats must be spayed and neutered, and the

1 City need to provide the resources for citizens to do  
2 so. The City almost must provide the resources to  
3 enforce the current laws and regulations. It has  
4 been made clear today that the Department of Health  
5 is not doing that at all, which is completely  
6 unacceptable, and I hope you'll work to address that.  
7 If they won't ask for more resources, we all will,  
8 and that's why we are here today. We cannot win this  
9 battel with breeding going on in our backyards,  
10 bodegas, and city streets. It is utterly  
11 unacceptable for individuals to profit from breeding  
12 while the city shelter and rescuers are overwhelmed  
13 and struggling to keep up financially and physically.  
14 This not only goes against everything we stand for,  
15 but directly undermines our mission to reduce the  
16 overpopulation crisis and save lives. So many  
17 situations I've encountered this year could have been  
18 avoided if spay/neuter resources were available to  
19 people. One example is a 37-cat hoarding case that  
20 started from just two cats. This case was handled by  
21 my organization with zero support from the City,  
22 including the NYPD who were called repeatedly and  
23 responded but then did nothing. As the wife of a  
24 NYPD detective, I can say with 100 percent confidence  
25

1  
2 that the NYPD does not have the training or resources  
3 to deal with animal issues which is extremely sad and  
4 disappointing. If we don't act now, this crisis will  
5 only continue to escalate leaving countless animals  
6 to suffer and stretching our city's resources even  
7 thinner. I urge you to not only support Council  
8 Member Brannan's bill 1018, but to work together to  
9 create a comprehensive lasting solution this issue.  
10 There is no reason stray and homeless animals should  
11 be suffering on our streets when all of this, this  
12 sea of green, is giving you the solution.

13 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you.

14 MEAGAN LICARI: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Next panelist.

16 BECKY WISDOM: Hello and thank you for  
17 having this hearing today. My name is Becky Wisdom,  
18 and I run a nonprofit cat rescue organizations called  
19 Greenpoint Cats. Like a lot of rescuers, I first  
20 started doing this work because I couldn't ignore the  
21 many free-roaming and abandoned cats and kittens all  
22 living and dying within blocks of my home. My  
23 inability to turn my back on this kind of suffering  
24 and my commitment to helping my local community is  
25 how I became part of the New York City volunteer



1  
2 workforce of animal rescuers. Sadly, my personally  
3 values, compassion and care, are not enough to solve  
4 this crisis. I am working around the clock often in  
5 response to the many, many desperate pleas for help  
6 from the community and my work is barely making a  
7 dent. We are now in full-blown animal  
8 overpopulation crisis in New York City due to this  
9 lack of low-cost city-funded spay/neuter services and  
10 the lack of enforcement of current laws of spay and  
11 neuter of free-roaming pets which includes the many  
12 cats in warehouses and bodegas in other working cat  
13 sets. I have met too many pet owners and caretakers  
14 who want to do the right thing by spay/neutering the  
15 animals in their care, but they simply can't find an  
16 affordable and accessible option. I talked to good  
17 Samaritans who though they were doing a kind thing by  
18 bringing home a few kittens or rescuing some local  
19 cats, not realizing that without spay/neuter surgery,  
20 cats are not great indoor pets. Male kittens grow up  
21 to be males that spray or females that go into heat.  
22 In a home with just one unsterilized males and one  
23 unsterilized female will inevitably lead to more  
24 cats, many of which end up abandoned. As a rescuer,  
25 I have access to a very small number of spay/neuter

1  
2 appointments every month that are intended for stray  
3 and free-roaming cats. Allocating those few spots to  
4 the thousands of cats needing spay/neuter is like  
5 bailing out the Titanic with a teaspoon, and yet I do  
6 what I can and I also extend whatever appointments I  
7 can spare to pet owners who are coming very close to  
8 the decision to abandon their pet rather than  
9 surrendering it to an overcrowded city shelter. It is  
10 time for New York to recognize the crisis and do its  
11 part by prioritizing spay/neuter services to all New  
12 Yorkers rather than offloading this problem to  
13 exhausted rescuers like myself. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: thank you very  
15 much. I want to thank the panel. Oh, and i--  
16 Council Member Ariola--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: [interposing] I  
18 juts--

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: would like--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: [interposing]  
21 like to share a story, Meagan, about how we met.  
22 Puppy Kitty New York City and our office received--  
23 well, we received a phone call from the NYPD because  
24 it was a rescuer who was a bad actor and not taking  
25 care of the cats in her care. And we called the

1  
2 ASPCA and they wouldn't help, and we called ACC and  
3 they wouldn't help. The NYPD-- and now I know the  
4 connection because your husband is a member of  
5 service-- knew to reach out to you, and you came and  
6 you trapped and you brought them to the hospital,  
7 those that needed care, and that's how our  
8 relationship began. But that's the story of each and  
9 every person in this room, and I'm very lucky to have  
10 you in my district, Zion's [sic] mission, Itty Bitty  
11 City Kitty, Puppy Kitty New York city, the Meow  
12 Squad, Bobby and the Strays, some individuals who  
13 want to remain nameless but are here as just  
14 citizens. That's why we have to support you, because  
15 you're there when no one else comes for us, not the  
16 city agencies. They tell us no. They overburdened  
17 and they have too much, but I doubt they have as many  
18 cats as you do, and I've been to your facility and I  
19 know what it's like and I know how much you care.  
20 So, thank you so much, and thank you for coming down  
21 today and giving your testimony, and others who did  
22 not come from my district but did submit testimony.  
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
25 much to this panel. Yes?

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Can I just-- I  
3 just want to echo that, by the way. Meagan and Puppy  
4 Kitty, I called-- I called her about-- I called  
5 Meagan about a number of things, because there's no  
6 city agency that we can get to come and help. So we  
7 have to call on the not-for-profits. And 432 cats  
8 you have? That's incredible. That's double the  
9 amount of any of the larger shelters in the City of  
10 New York. So, just imagine volunteering your time to  
11 do that, and working with that. And all of you out  
12 there, it's just amazing. But I'm still trying--  
13 we're still trying to trap that momma cat which I've  
14 been feeding now for a few years. Meagan sat in my  
15 driveway for two and a half hours and the cat  
16 outsmarted all of us.

17 MEAGAN LICARI: Yep.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, that-- no,  
19 she won't-- we can't trap her. We just-- she's too  
20 smart, had two litters already, and it's frustrating.  
21 But just imagine that-- magnify that a million times  
22 in the City of New York, and that's what we're  
23 facing. But thank you all. Thanks again. Thanks  
24 Meagan.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: thank you. So,  
3 the panel, the next panel is April Lang, Cindy  
4 Stutts-- I think it is-- Chloe Rein, R-e-i-n, Emily  
5 Olive Petit, and Crystal Hayes, and Chloe Rice. We  
6 have two Chloe's on the panel. Okay, please, the  
7 first panelist, you may proceed.

8 APRIL LANG: Yes, hi there. My name is  
9 April Lang, and as a member of the Kitty Kind intake  
10 team, I receive many heartbreaking requests for help  
11 from people wanting to relinquish their animal family  
12 members or finding abandoned animals on the street.  
13 And I just wanted to highlight a few examples of the  
14 issues that the City is currently facing that we have  
15 experienced. A woman wanted to give up her newly ill  
16 cat, because she couldn't afford the treatment that  
17 her vet recommended. We suggested she reach out to  
18 the AMC and apply for financial assistance. She did,  
19 and without that financial help her cat would have  
20 died. A family who started out with a male and  
21 female cat, and because they couldn't afford the cost  
22 of spay/neuter, ended up with over 30 additional  
23 unfixed cats in their apartment. Then there's a  
24 long-time rescuer who for years made sure cats and  
25 their kittens who gave birth in backyards in her

1 neighborhood got spayed and neutered and discovered  
2 that the low-cost clinic in her area had pulled back  
3 the number of spay/neuter appointments they had been  
4 offering due to a veterinarian shortage. Without the  
5 ability to arrange those appointments, more kittens  
6 would be giving birth in her neighborhood. A couple  
7 who were moving wanted to give-- well, they wanted to  
8 give up their three cats. They really didn't want  
9 to, but they-- they needed to give up their three  
10 cats because they couldn't find an affordable  
11 apartment that was pet-friendly. The need is great  
12 for high-volume and low-cost spay/neuter services,  
13 affordable vet care, and pet-friendly housing.  
14 Without these three things, the animals and the  
15 people in our city will continue to suffer. Thank  
16 you.

17  
18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: thank you. Next  
19 panelist.

20 CINDY STUTTS: Hello. Thank you very  
21 much, Chair Schulman and rest of the committee. My  
22 name is Cindy Stutts and I am the founder of Bunnies  
23 and Beyond. We've been a partner with ACC for years.  
24 I spoke back at the guinea pig ban. I've been doing  
25 this for almost 30 years, and at one point we had--

1  
2 it addresses what everyone's been saying. There's a  
3 lack of veterinarians and even more so for our  
4 organization, because not all vets are trained--  
5 they're barely trained to do cats and dogs, and we  
6 can't even-- rabbits and guinea pigs, forget about  
7 it. The last clinic in New York City that can do  
8 low-cost spay and neuters, and they offer it through  
9 ACC and all of us rescues, is about-- was bought by  
10 private equity and is about to cut off the rescue and  
11 ACC. So, what do we do with all these lack of  
12 veterinary clinics to get these animals spayed and  
13 neutered? And a rabbit can-- and a guinea pig both  
14 can have babies like every 30 days. So, I'm ready  
15 to-- I've talked to some of my vet. We're ready to  
16 open a clinic here. But I need funding. I have the  
17 people resources and I have the vet resources, but I  
18 need the money to open something, and I think after a  
19 while I can self-fund myself, but we need to open  
20 something like this for the small animals.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. And  
22 just to your point, if you remember the hearing we  
23 had about the guinea pigs, there's only one vet in  
24 the entire city that actually does the spaying.

25

1  
2 CINDY STUTTS: Well, now two, but they're  
3 about--

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Oh,  
5 there's two?

6 CINDY STUTTS: Yeah, it was Doctor Cleary  
7 and Doctor Wilson, and they're part of the veterinary  
8 clinic on the west side.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yeah, they're the  
10 only two that do that. So, yeah, to your point. I'm  
11 sorry. Next panelist.

12 CHLOE REIN: Hi, I'm Chloe Rein. I'm the  
13 President of the small rescue organization in  
14 Brooklyn called Brooklyn Kitty Committee. I wanted  
15 to thank you for listening to our community today.  
16 It's really important that we feel like we're heard.  
17 My story is in 2015 a friend of mine asked me to tap  
18 a kitty that was living under her house in Crown  
19 Heights, and upon further investigation I found that  
20 there were 30 cats within a one block radius, which  
21 we ended up trapping, neutering and rehoming. The  
22 primary source had actually come from a city-run  
23 parks building called St. John's Rec Center within  
24 District 36, and this project was not supported by  
25 the City. Though I used the cheapest spay/neuter



1  
2 services available at the time in 2015, the project  
3 still cost me \$4,000 personally to complete, which I  
4 scrambled to fundraise over months and months of  
5 pushing on social media and emailing friends and  
6 family and people I did not know on Next Door and  
7 things like that. The project also triggered  
8 numerous parks employees and neighbors in that area  
9 to ask me to help with spay/neuter for their own  
10 pets, because they also could not afford these  
11 services, which I did and covered personally. Ten  
12 years later, spay/neuter and vet services are still  
13 unaffordable and inaccessible to many rescuers and  
14 pet parents. No private animal organizations have  
15 opened and increased the accessibility. It's their  
16 version of low-cost. It's still unaffordable for the  
17 majority of New Yorkers that qualify for these  
18 services. Thus, the problem remains and continues to  
19 grow in the form of a cat overpopulation crisis.  
20 Unaffordable spay/neuter surgeries and basic vet care  
21 costs have essentially become a class issue. A low-  
22 income family having to make the choice between doing  
23 the right thing for their pet versus paying their  
24 rent is unacceptable in the richest city in the  
25 world. Expecting small private rescue organizations

1  
2 and independent rescuers to shoulder the spay/neuter  
3 of 500,000 to a million+ outdoor cats is  
4 incomprehensible. This is a city problem and not a  
5 institution problem-- a private institution problem.  
6 Animal rescuers are essentially unpaid city workers  
7 with no recognition from the city for doing all the  
8 sad and disgusting and tragic work because we care  
9 about our city and these cats. But this is an  
10 unsustainable model and rescuers and organizations--

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Can  
12 you just sum up? Thank you.

13 CHLOE REIN: are going broke-- I'm almost  
14 finished. Rescuers and organizations are going  
15 broke, shutting doors, hiding from their emails, and  
16 burning out. The city needs to step up and take  
17 responsibility for its shortcomings and allocate  
18 funds to push our efforts forward. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
20 panelist.

21 EMILY OLIVE PETIT: Good afternoon,  
22 Council. My name is Emily Olive Petit. I work with  
23 two rescue groups, Harlem Animal Rescue and New York  
24 City Animal Rescue Girls. I live in Ridgewood in  
25 Queens, and I work in Harlem where there's an

1 enormous cat colony. It's a neighborhood overrun  
2 with feral, stray and dumped cats. This summer alone  
3 I facilitated the trapping, fostering, adoption, and  
4 veterinary treatment of multiple cats, several  
5 kittens, one abandoned blind pit bull. Seeking  
6 affordable medical care for these animals almost  
7 always involves drastic financial sacrifice for me  
8 and from those with whom I work closely and who love  
9 these abused and abandoned animals as much as I do.  
10 I have witnessed death and sickness firsthand. I've  
11 witnessed mother cats yowling for their deceased  
12 babies. I've witnessed dogs wagging their tails for a  
13 human who left and never came back. When the time  
14 comes to seek veterinary intervention for those who  
15 survive, I often must choose between their wellbeing  
16 and mine. Additionally, feral cats increased street  
17 presence harms the ornithological population of a  
18 city with limited greenspace. And as of now, there  
19 are two primary gaps in our animal welfare system.  
20 The first is the paucity of funding for spay and  
21 neuter services. Such intervention is integral, as  
22 has been covered today over and over again, to  
23 reducing the number of reproductive cats and dogs who  
24 are starving and struggling before our eyes. And  
25

1  
2 secondly, we need a streamlined source with  
3 information about where to find and how to access  
4 such services. These are domestic animals and whose  
5 company we as New Yorkers and as human beings revel  
6 and thrive. We love them, and they love us in  
7 return. In order to build a healthier city for them  
8 and for us, we need to make it easier to access  
9 affordable veterinary care and spay and neuter.  
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
12 panelist?

13 UNIDENTIFIED: Hi, thank you so much for  
14 the opportunity to speak. My phone died hours ago so  
15 bear with me, I'm going to wing it. Okay, yeah, I  
16 will send it.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: The way you can  
18 also submit that subsequently. So you have up to 72  
19 hours to do that.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: Okay, I'll do that. Thank  
21 you. I am here just as an individual cat lady with  
22 no children who rescued a cat from BIDAWA [sic] five  
23 years ago that was found on the streets of Brooklyn  
24 with a broken paw. The only reason he wasn't dead  
25 was because it was fully of maggots, keeping him

1  
2 alive, or really keeping infection away. So, last  
3 summer he was diagnosed with FIP. After a week of  
4 being hospitalized between Vedge [sic] and  
5 Williamsburg, and Animal Medical Center. The cost of  
6 that hospitalization alone was over \$18,000. Until  
7 honestly, like, six, eight weeks ago, the medication  
8 for treating FIP was illegal to prescribe to cats,  
9 and that's because it is also used to treat the  
10 immunocompromised for COVID. This has since changed,  
11 thank God, after years of cat lover unification  
12 across the world to organize to make sure that people  
13 have access to that treatment. But the treatment  
14 also costs thousands of dollars. So if I wasn't  
15 credit-worthy enough to be able to take out a loan,  
16 my cat would be dead, and he's been through way too  
17 much die from that. So, I just want to make sure  
18 that the Council is aware that this is a treatable  
19 disease that is becoming more common because there  
20 are-- the population is so high and the disease that  
21 it mutates from is very infectious.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Appreciate it.  
23 You can-- by the way, you can send the testimony to  
24 testimony@council.nyc.gov and you have up to 72  
25 hours.

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UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. I want to say thank you to this panel. We're going to call the next one. We have-- believe it or not we still have a lot of panelists to go through and we appreciate everyone waiting, because this is a really important issue, and the fact that you're here and testifying is going to make a huge difference in how we're able to move forward. So really appreciate you spending the time in being here. So the next panel is Esther Ragelson, Iliana Gibbs [sp?], Eliana Gibbs [sp?], Nichole Fell [sp?], Jennifer Rhein, Margaret Lee, and Michael Phillips. Okay, we're-- what I'm going to do is since there are two people not here, I'm going to call two other folks to come up and join this panel so that it hopefully will cut down on the time that it takes. Tony Poon? Is Tony here? And Erin Hendry. Okay. Okay, first panelist you can begin.

ESTHER RAGELSON: Hi, my name's Esther Ragelson and I've been doing animal rescue for several decades. I'm a typical example of-- with all these people-- childless cat lady among other things and I live in the neighborhood. And I just want to

1  
2 pint out, as you note, there's no infrastructure for  
3 us. We have no space. We have no transportation to  
4 take care of animals and vet care is expensive, and I  
5 echo what everyone else has said. You've heard it  
6 all before, okay? I've done trapping in Virginia. I  
7 have access to a car, access to space, access to low-  
8 cost care, and it's really simple. Here, it's  
9 immensely stressful and depressing. I do want to say  
10 that there are several other things that should be  
11 addressed. For one thing, I support congestion  
12 pricing, but those of us who do rescue in Manhattan  
13 are going to be further diminished by it if that's  
14 the case, okay. Also, sorry I'm off my script.  
15 Trying to rush. I do also want to point out that we  
16 also do wildlife rescue often and we suffer the same  
17 stresses, and I hope that you'll address that in the  
18 future very soon. And one other thing. I have three  
19 feral cats that I'm taking care of Brooklyn Bridge.  
20 There's a woman in Brooklyn who was a hoarder and  
21 she's in assisted living and just sold her house and  
22 she has seven ferals in her home. We need  
23 sanctuaries for ferals, because they often have to be  
24 relocated, and that's a huge issue. We don't have  
25 the resources.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay.

3 ESTHER RAGELSON: We don't have the  
4 resources to move cats. I had a colony of nine cats  
5 at the sea port, and it cost me alone \$5,000 plus  
6 other costs that we generated with donations. It's  
7 prohibitively expensive. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, thank you.  
9 Next panelist.

10 ERIN HENDRY: Hi, my name's Erin Hendry  
11 and I volunteer at Ollie's Place in East Village.  
12 We're an all-donation-based, all-volunteer-run  
13 shelter. So if people don't show up to their shift,  
14 the cats don't get fed. The cats don't get their  
15 meds. Something beautiful about East Village is that  
16 there's so much traffic from the public that comes in  
17 and sees them in the window and whether they've owned  
18 before or whether they're new to the cat world, they  
19 light up and see how great the cats are doing there,  
20 because we diligently take care of their health.  
21 They have a lot of vet bills. The med list that I  
22 get every morning when I go in on Sunday can be  
23 really long and extensive, but because of the  
24 compassion of all the volunteers and how hands-on we  
25 are, it really shows how much they transformed, and



1 then it makes them ideal for people to adopt. And I  
2 think some of the things that, along with what  
3 everyone else is saying, is education. There are a  
4 lot of people that come in. There was a girl last  
5 week at-- when we were switching shifts saying, you  
6 know, there's a deli where it's their third litter.  
7 There's, you know, two female and males cats that  
8 they've had forever, but they're on their third batch  
9 of kittens, and it's like where are those kittens  
10 going to go. Again, it's about not only providing  
11 those services by letting the community know that  
12 they're available and why they're important. One  
13 time I went into a deli and a guy had a cat that  
14 wasn't neutered, and I asked him is this yours? He  
15 said I can't take it home because it sprays. My mom  
16 won't let me, but you know, if he had been neutered  
17 it might have been a different story. So there's a  
18 lot of that that happens, and we almost lost funding  
19 to stay open and pay our rent in January, and luckily  
20 everyone banded together, but like everyone here,  
21 we're kind of at our wits end in what we can provide.  
22 We're picking out of our own pockets. We're doing  
23 all we can, but if we had a little more assistance we  
24 could do so, so much more, and maybe give each other  
25

1  
2 a little breathe-- and empower the community to feel  
3 more involved and to feel more bonded with animals  
4 and truly see what they give you. I took home a cat  
5 from our shelter when we were about close, Coco, and--  
6 - quickly-- I've been unemployed for a year and it's  
7 very new for me, and on the days where I feel really  
8 worthless I look at her and I see the progress she's  
9 made, and I'm reminded that I'm doing a good job and  
10 I don't know what I'd do without her, and I want that  
11 for everybody that needs that companion. Thank you  
12 for letting us talk today.

13 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: No, thank you very  
14 much. Next panelist.

15 MARGARET LEE: Hi. I'm Margaret Lee, a  
16 Manhattan animal advocate here to thank the Council  
17 for Intro 1018 for the rescue of cats and dogs, and  
18 at the same time urgently ask you to expand your  
19 circle of compassion to other animals under our  
20 stewardship. Many New Yorkers, the latest poll shows  
21 71 percent, want carriage horses to be rescued from  
22 their enslavement and retired to the sanctuaries  
23 waiting for them. Those of us who care deeply about  
24 animals have been pleading for a hearing to pass  
25 Ryder's Law, Intro 967. So, as an animal defender, I

1  
2 must put in another plea for them. Their misery must  
3 end. Passing a carriage-- a horse carriage ban will  
4 help New Yorkers as well, because so many of us find  
5 it extremely tormenting to witness the horses  
6 constant daily suffering. The plight of these long-  
7 suffering horses also has global attention. The  
8 world has been watching and waiting for us to do the  
9 right thing as more vigorously compassionate cities  
10 have already done. Also on the subject of animal  
11 rescue I'm calling on the Council to please end wet  
12 markets in New York. A bill had been introduced in  
13 2020 but got nowhere. In October, wet market pop-up  
14 tents will once again appear on city streets as part  
15 of a ritual torture of chickens. This should have  
16 stopped long ago. At this very moment, millions of  
17 chickens are being raised for this tortuous ritual  
18 with children participating in these cruel and  
19 dangerous wet markets, with the cruelty starting even  
20 months ahead of the ritual itself. The Council can  
21 preemptively rescue these chickens and protect the  
22 public by banning wet markets. This is an emergency.  
23 It must be done. Please do the right thing.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
25 panelist.

1  
2 TONY POON: Hi. Good afternoon. My  
3 name's Tony Poon and I volunteer for different rescue  
4 in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens. So first I want  
5 to tell you what my friend Andy said last week. He  
6 lives in Richmond Hill and his family loves community  
7 cats and feed them, but unfortunately, they cannot  
8 afford to treat the sick ones. So when the cats get  
9 sick and die, Andy and his family got really sad and  
10 could not stand it. So they decided to stop feeding  
11 the cats so they would go away. So I'm not here to  
12 judge them because they are good people, but I hope  
13 that there's a low-cost veterinary program so good  
14 people don't have to make terrible decisions. So I  
15 used to volunteer for Puppy Kitty New York City in  
16 Queens and they are excellent organization, as you  
17 could hear from Meagan, and they take in all kinds of  
18 animals. But they are maxed out of capacity. But  
19 unfortunately, from time to time, they would find  
20 people dump the cats outside the shelter. So another  
21 sad story. So, for seven years I volunteer once a  
22 week with all these places in East Village like Erin  
23 over here, from time to time. And people would come  
24 in and surrender the cats. So this reality is lots  
25 of people who love cats, but for whatever reason they

1  
2 need help. Some people in dire need of support to  
3 address the overpopulation of street cats. Now, in  
4 my neighborhood-- I'm in Elmhurst. My neighbor and I  
5 feed street cats on our block, but on every other  
6 block I see colonies of cats everywhere. So most of  
7 them are not neutered. So, if there is a low-cost  
8 trap and neuter program, it would help to hold down  
9 the street cat population. So, finally, I wanted to  
10 give a shout to Little Wanderers who saved one of my  
11 community cats who are named Blackberry. Little  
12 Wanderers got the cat much needed dental work with  
13 AMC which cost thousands of dollars, and because of  
14 that dental work, Blackberry needs a feeding tube.  
15 Since I'm not experienced with the feeding tube,  
16 Little Wanderers found someone from New Haven,  
17 Connecticut to foster Blackberry. So I'm so happy  
18 Little Wanderers able to help individual like me. So  
19 this is another great shelter that could use more  
20 help from the city, so Little Wanderer can help  
21 individual like me. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, thank you  
23 very much. Next panelist.

24 JENNIFER RHEIN: hi, my name is Jennifer  
25 Rhein. I'm representing for Animals Inc. we are a

1 not-for-profit animal rescue based in Queens, New  
2 York, focused on TNR and adoption of the friendly  
3 animals. We run solely on volunteers and donations.  
4 I have volunteered for Animals Inc. for over eight  
5 years, and during that time I've not only been able  
6 to help numerous cats myself, but also the people who  
7 care for them. For the last few months I've been  
8 helping an 85-year-old woman who feeds cats near my  
9 school in Richmond Hill, Queens in Council Member  
10 Schulman's district. She herself has taken many of  
11 these cats to the vet herself over the last decade.  
12 She spent thousands of dollars out of pocket, getting  
13 them spayed, neutered, dental surgeries, tail  
14 amputations, other surgeries, and I see the suffering  
15 that it causes her. I've also met some of the most  
16 caring and kind people in my life during the time  
17 that I've been volunteering. Other volunteers who  
18 commit their free time to helping as many animals as  
19 they can who are in need, and their stories bring me  
20 to tears, not only about the suffering of the  
21 animals, but what they themselves go through. Most  
22 of them are in financial crisis. They have maxed out  
23 credit cards. They're watching their own health  
24 deteriorate. They miss out on family gatherings and  
25

1  
2 vacations, because they can't leave the animals and  
3 they don't have anyone else to help care for them. I  
4 want to bring their stories to you today, as they  
5 couldn't be here today to tell them themselves. They  
6 couldn't take off another day from work, and they  
7 couldn't leave the shelters or the cats that they're  
8 caring for. Our founder and another volunteer just  
9 this morning were at the vet with a cat that crashed  
10 and is costing now almost \$1,000 with the rescue  
11 discount that we will have to do fund raising on  
12 social media to cover. Every day, I see multiple  
13 posts and receive multiple emails on social media  
14 about an animal in need. Most of the people in this  
15 city want to help these animals, but they worry that  
16 in doing so they themselves will go into debt. It  
17 shouldn't be this way. New York needs high-volume,  
18 free and low-cost spay/neuter programs for all New  
19 Yorkers. We need to help New York's kindest so that  
20 we can continue to help the community and the  
21 animals. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
23 much and thank you for what you do. It's really  
24 appreciated, and any time call my office, whatever  
25 you need. So thank you.

1  
2 MIKE PHILLIPS: hello, Mike Phillips,  
3 President and Co-founder of Urban Cat League. Before  
4 I start, I just wanted to commend and thank you all  
5 on the committee for your astute questioning earlier  
6 in the hearing. It's clear that you understand all  
7 the catch-22s that we confront and it's deeply  
8 appreciated. In Hell's Kitchen-- what time is it,  
9 4:00 on Friday-- there are no large free-roaming cat  
10 colonies in Hell's Kitchen. In the 90s, at turn of  
11 the century, we had several very large feral cat  
12 colonies, most notably 85 cats on the railroad tracks  
13 in front of the Jacob Javitz [sp?] Center. We  
14 humanely reduced that colony to zero. It took us  
15 several years to do it. In 2003, a group of  
16 neighbors in Hell's Kitchen, we incorporated with the  
17 mission to spay and neuter every cat with four paws  
18 on the ground in all of Hell's Kitchen. It took us  
19 several years to do it, but we had a secret weapon.  
20 The Council Member she mentioned, the Wild Bird Fund.  
21 One of the founders of the Wild Bird Fund, Karen  
22 Hygird [sp?], she ran a vet clinic. She was the  
23 manager of a vet office on the Upper West Side. She  
24 thought our mission was wonderful and commendable.  
25 She gave us unlimited spay/neuter at a price that we



1  
2 could afford. Now, in Hell's Kitchen, our vet  
3 practices are all owned by corporations. When we did  
4 our 200 cats to get to 100 percent spay/neuter with  
5 the colonies, we paid about \$15,000 for 200 cats.  
6 Now, in Hell's Kitchen, the vet practice closest to  
7 where I live, they charge \$800 for a male neuter, and  
8 \$1,250 per female spay. It would take us about  
9 \$130,000 today to do what we call getting to a  
10 kitten-free zone. We have the luxury of being in  
11 sort of a maintenance mode now in Hell's Kitchen.  
12 Don't understand me, we have a constant stream of  
13 abandoned animals on the street, but we pick them up  
14 as soon as we can. We get them spayed and neutered,  
15 notably at-- someone read testimony from Andy Kaplan,  
16 the founder of the Toby Project. We take cats to his  
17 clinic, very reasonably get them spayed and neutered,  
18 and we get them adopted. They don't land on the  
19 street and start reproducing and gravitate to a large  
20 feral cat colony. So, the only difference-- the  
21 people here in this room, they're working just as  
22 hard as we did, even harder. The only difference is  
23 they have their hands tied behind them. We had  
24 access to unlimited spay/neuter when we needed a  
25 price that we could afford. This is such an

1  
2 imminently solvable problem. That's the encouraging  
3 thing about this. With enough spay/neuter they could  
4 all do the same thing. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Thank  
6 you so much. Thank you to this panel. Appreciate it  
7 every much. Next panel is Laura Leopardo, Deserie  
8 Matos, Linda Mann, Deborah Thomas, Raquel Battle  
9 [sp?], and Sharon Jeter-- Brown Jeter. We're missing  
10 a couple people. Alright, we're going to take from  
11 the other panel, then. No, here they come. Never  
12 mind. Did we call your name? Yeah, then sit. No,  
13 we didn't. We can. Bonnie, why don't you come up?  
14 First panelist, go ahead.

15 LAURA LEOPARDO: Hi, my name is Laura  
16 Leopardo. I'm in District 35 and I am a New York  
17 animal advocate. I'm here to support Council Member  
18 Brannan's bill regarding independent unlicensed  
19 breeders selling animals and its impact on the City's  
20 animal shelters, as well as the relationship to  
21 affordable vet care. Breeding dogs and cats is  
22 cruel. Breeders treat such individuals as nothing  
23 more than canine cash machines. They often have  
24 substandard breeding practices and very often animals  
25 are raised in poor and filthy conditions because

1  
2 there is no oversight. There's also no customer  
3 vetting process. On numerous occasions I've seen  
4 people selling pets on the street, like at Union  
5 Square on my neighborhood block and on Craigslist.  
6 This can lead to animals ending up in the hands of  
7 unscrupulous characters and used such as for bait  
8 dogs in the dog fighting industry. Over-breeding a  
9 dog or a cat can lead to life-threatening health  
10 issues for the puppies and the kittens. There's no  
11 protection for consumers who end up with a sick  
12 animal. If vet costs are prohibitive, animals are  
13 often turned over to an already overpopulated  
14 shelter, and we know unfortunately what can happen  
15 when shelters are overpopulated. Often some healthy  
16 adoptable animals do get euthanized. We don't need  
17 more puppies and kittens being bred. There have been  
18 several recent articles noting the crisis at shelters  
19 and the lack of low-cost city-funded vet clinics.  
20 The Gothamist had an article titled, "New York City  
21 Animal Shelters are Overcrowded with Dogs." The  
22 Brooklyn paper had an article titled, "A Solvable  
23 Problem: Brooklyn's Animal Rescuers Say City-funded  
24 Veterinary Clinics Could Help End Shelter Crisis."  
25 The New York Times reported, which was stated

1  
2 earlier, that the price of vet care has soared more  
3 than 60 percent over the past decade. Let's help the  
4 empty shelters by stopping independent breeders from  
5 selling animals and fund affordable vet clinics which  
6 can prevent animals from flooding the city shelters.  
7 Just want to quickly close and say I respectfully am  
8 pleading with you Liz Schulman and Speaker Adams that  
9 we move ahead and rescue the poor horses in the horse  
10 carriage industry. As it was said before, more than  
11 71 percent of New Yorkers want them banned. As was  
12 said before, this very morning there was a criminal  
13 trial-- a criminal trial for Ryder's owner, just  
14 another case of abuse in this industry. Many cities  
15 worldwide have banned them. It's now time for New  
16 York City to do the same. So thank you very much.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
18 panelist. And I also-- for folks-- there are some  
19 folks who signed up late, I just want to let  
20 everyone-- just remind everyone that everyone has  
21 about two minutes. We'll obviously let you sum up  
22 and all that. we have-- we still have a lot more  
23 people to testify, and we want to make sure that we  
24 get to everybody. Thank you very much. Go ahead.  
25 Next panelist.

1  
2 LINDA MANN: Council Member Schulman and  
3 Council Members of the Health Committee, my name is  
4 Linda Mann. As an animal rights activist, I so  
5 appreciate this committee hearing. I am here today  
6 to support Intro 1018 and all of the people who do  
7 whatever is needed to rescue, help and care for  
8 animals in our city regardless of their personal and  
9 financial costs. They are the ones who always answer  
10 the call and step up. They are constantly fighting  
11 an uphill battle, but shouldn't have to bear the cost  
12 alone. I urge this committee and the City Council to  
13 make adequate funding available for affordable  
14 spay/neuter and affordable vet care for all in need.  
15 This committee can create change and transform the  
16 state of animal welfare in New York City. The  
17 decisions you make here will determine what the  
18 future of animal welfare looks like in our city. In  
19 that spirit, I am hopeful that this committee  
20 sometime very soon will hold the hearing on Intro  
21 967, Ryder's Law, to end the suffering of our  
22 beautiful, abused horses. They, too, need to be  
23 rescued.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
25 panelist.

1  
2 DEBORAH THOMAS: Good afternoon. My name  
3 is Deborah Thomas and I've been a volunteer at the  
4 New York City ACC Manhattan shelter in cat adoptions  
5 for nearly 20 years. I'll get straight to the point.  
6 Since we're currently seeing troubling overcrowding  
7 at the ACC and other shelters due to people  
8 surrendering their pets in large numbers, due to  
9 evictions, people moving out of New York City or  
10 people moving into buildings that do not allow pets,  
11 as well as extremely high veterinary costs, I  
12 respectfully urge the City Council to do two things  
13 to help turn around this animal surrender surge.  
14 Number one, please allocate additional funding to the  
15 ACC so that they can hire more animal care and  
16 placement staff as well as additional veterinarians  
17 and medical support staff to help with intake and in-  
18 shelter care once the animals are at the ACC,  
19 including spay and neuter, which would facilitate and  
20 promote more and faster adoptions. And number two,  
21 please write and pass a pets in housing bill that  
22 would outlaw landlords prohibiting pet owners from  
23 having household pets in any and all New York City  
24 housing, no matter the type of housing or the size or  
25 breed of the dog, cat or rabbit. And I'd be happy to

1 help anyone who wants to write something like this,  
2 to help them write it and lobby for it. And finally,  
3 I also support Intro 1018, and I would like to  
4 respectfully urge Chair Schulman to please bring to  
5 the floor and pass Intro 967 Ryder's Law which would  
6 ban and discontinue the suffering of carriage horses  
7 in New York City. Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
10 panelist.

11 DESERIE MATOS: Good afternoon, Council  
12 Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to  
13 you today. My name is Deserie Matos and I'm the  
14 President of Keep Me Warm Dog Houses, Inc. We  
15 provide free wooden, insulated dog houses for dogs  
16 living in their owner's back yards without shelter or  
17 who have inadequate shelter. These dogs are not  
18 allowed to live indoors with their families and are  
19 often used as guard dogs. We also offer free spay  
20 and neuter,-- which we had to introduce that a couple  
21 years ago because of the demand and the need--  
22 collars, leashes, toys, bedding, and whatever is  
23 needed to improve the quality of life for these dogs.  
24 I'm sure we all agree that we have a serious problem  
25 with overcrowding in our city shelters with many

1  
2 animals being euthanized simply because there isn't  
3 enough space at the shelters. Perfectly adoptable  
4 beautiful animals being put down, put to sleep,  
5 killed. I strongly believe that we could greatly  
6 reduce the number of dogs, cats and other animals in  
7 the shelter if free or low-cost spay/neuter were  
8 available. It is the only humane way to control the  
9 pet population. I am currently working on getting  
10 two pit bulls spayed. They are in a house with three  
11 intact males and have had several litters already and  
12 they are only two years old. The owner was breeding  
13 them and had decided after much discussion with him  
14 to have them fixed. I found a low-cost vet to do the  
15 procedures at a cost of \$500 each. I don't consider  
16 \$1,000 for two dogs to be low-cost. Nevertheless, it  
17 has to be done, along with the three other dogs that  
18 need to be fixed. I worry about the puppies that  
19 were born to these mothers who were sold and of  
20 course were not spayed or neutered and the many  
21 litters that will be born from them. It is highly  
22 likely that some of these dogs will be surrendered to  
23 the shelters, and some of them might not make it out  
24 alive. This doesn't have to be their fate. We can  
25 address these serious issues and we could start by



1  
2 offering easily accessible free, low-cost spay/neuter  
3 and affordable veterinary care. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
5 panelist.

6 BONNIE BEHREND: Hi there. My name is  
7 bonnie Behrend. Very nice to be here today. Thank  
8 you for accommodating me. This is probably the best  
9 audience I've had since I worked in television, CNBC,  
10 Court TV, CBS, and Bloomberg Television. So I'm very  
11 proud to be here. My take today is just slightly  
12 different, and I'm not sure this is-- I'm saying this  
13 right. But this is what I want to do, formally  
14 submit a citizen's legislative proposal of a  
15 comprehensive solution for animal care reform that we  
16 all acknowledge today.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: You can submit that  
18 to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

19 BONNIE BEHREND: I did. I did on Friday,  
20 same thing.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Alright, so we're--  
22 - after this hearing, everything get-- because people  
23 have 72 hours to submit written testimony or written  
24 materials, and then it gets looked at by the  
25

1  
2 Committee staff, and then we sit and go over it. So,  
3 just so you know.

4           BONNIE BEHREND: What I want to-- this is  
5 short thing if you'll allow me. I'm calling it  
6 Noah's Act. It has nothing to do with religion, but  
7 it's a story that we all can recognize, and this is  
8 the first presentation of this legislative proposal,  
9 Noah's Act, what saves kid animal lives, and helps  
10 millions of precious, hurting companion animals who  
11 desperately need us to act more, better, faster. I  
12 also submitted a poster that describe it, and I was  
13 hoping to be able to share it here, but I am unable  
14 to at this moment, and what it-- succinctly, it's  
15 Noah's Act, state, federal regulation and legislation  
16 financed by public/private funding starting, though,  
17 with New York City. This is-- because there's so  
18 many great people here, so many people struggling and  
19 doing it every day for years and years and years to  
20 protect animals, to give, to sacrifice for them-- you  
21 know, we could set the standard for this national  
22 effort. And here's what it includes, though-- and it  
23 doesn't work with separate pieces. It all has to be  
24 comprehensive, and it includes--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] If  
3 you can summarize it, because--

4 BONNIE BEHREND: Yes, I am. Okay, sure.  
5 It's ban euthanasia. Ban breeding of companion  
6 animals for 10 years while we absorb all that are out  
7 there. Fund universal pet care. Fund vetted  
8 shelters at home, eliminating pet jail cells. Fund  
9 vetted adopters as employment. Pay people to take  
10 care. Fund Noah's Act Pet Acres, in other words  
11 homes with acres around it. And fund a crackdown on  
12 cruelty with more true animal-loving care staffing,  
13 more law enforcement, and greater penalties for  
14 animal cruelty. You know, these are our babies, our  
15 whole life.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Appreciate it.  
17 Looking forward to reading it.

18 BONNIE BEHREND: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
20 panelist.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm the Founder and  
22 Director of Fur Real NYC, a small, black-owned rescue  
23 and sanctuary in Queens in the Richmond Hill, Kew  
24 Gardens area. I've worked to save and help New York  
25 City's animals in five different decades spanning

1  
2 from walking dogs every Saturday in the 80s at the  
3 age of eight at Animal Haven-- which at the time was  
4 a hole-in-the-wall shelter three blocks from the  
5 housing projects where I grew up-- to today running a  
6 broke, failing rescue with over 60 street cats, some  
7 of whom are blind, crippled, and neurologically  
8 impaired. I am in deliberating poverty. Sorry.  
9 It's the first time I've had to like say it publicly.  
10 It's hard. I collect bottles and I rummage through  
11 recycling bins to find things to sell so I can feed  
12 our animals because there's no money. I go back and  
13 forth between my rescue and Housing Court. Thank  
14 you-- between my rescue and Housing Court because I'm  
15 being evicted from the three apartments that I have  
16 to house our cats. I have no more credit cards. I  
17 have no more bank account. I have nothing. I  
18 emptied out my retirement to keep my rescue on life-  
19 support. I haven't had a connected phone for most  
20 the year. I fare beat to get here today, and I'll  
21 fare beat when I leave. That's like a way of life.  
22 I'm on the train with cats. I'm carrying trapping  
23 equipment. I've been doing it for over a year now.  
24 People don't like it, but it's my life. I've spent  
25 nearly \$1.9 million of my own money to get this far

1 while working over 100 hours a week. I haven't had a  
2 day off in nearly five years since becoming a  
3 nonprofit. I pay to do this unseen work. I've paid  
4 with everything I own as well as with my help. I'm  
5 among the fulltime rescuers who do this for a living,  
6 except I've never been paid a dime. I've written  
7 personalized pleas to a number of local politicians  
8 only to be ignored. I've witnessed famous, wealthy  
9 rescues receive generous funding from local  
10 government while ignoring the rest of us. This only  
11 builds monopolies and will not save more animals.  
12 Our animals are dying and we all need money. We need  
13 help. Not all of us have the resources or time to  
14 become social media famous, and I applaud those who  
15 have been able to do that, but that would be another  
16 fulltime job for me to become a content creator. I  
17 don't have the time. I've worked too long-- I'm  
18 sorry. I've worked too long to be stuck in this  
19 situation. I'm not alone in this plea. Many of us  
20 are suffering out here alongside of our animals. The  
21 big name rescues aren't the only ones who deserve  
22 attention. I along with so many others who served  
23 this city for decades are all compassion-fatigued for  
24 many years. Where's the relief. And one more thing,  
25

1 just vet's offices, which this has been coming up all  
2 day. The animal crisis is being fueled by egregious  
3 price gouging by both private and nonprofit  
4 veterinary clinics and hospitals. When the guy down  
5 the road raises his prices, the guy over here will  
6 follow suit and so on and so forth. Now, just  
7 walking into most vet's offices around the City is  
8 \$80 to \$100 just to sit in the waiting room. For  
9 emergency hospitals, even those who are fellow  
10 nonprofits, the charge is up to \$330 just to have  
11 your companion animal looked at while they're in  
12 crisis. Why are these businesses not being  
13 regulated? Being able to help your fur family has  
14 now become a luxury rather than a necessity. Who  
15 gets priced out of this the most? This is the roach  
16 on the wall that we all want to ignore. It's the  
17 Black community. Black people cannot afford to spay  
18 and neuter their animals. Black people cannot afford  
19 urgent care for their animals. It's literal  
20 discrimination. New Yorkers are being priced out of  
21 vet care. What can the Council do to change this?  
22 And I just want to add one more thing very quickly.  
23 I have done a lot of international rescue. Yes, it's  
24 not New York City, but what led me to that-- number  
25

1  
2 one, I love animals all around the world and I used  
3 to travel a lot.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Right.

5 UNIDENTIFIED: I emptied out a shelter in  
6 Thailand, and I got a lot of flak from New Yorkers.  
7 Oh, you could help animals here. I spent  
8 exponentially less doing that than rescuing here from  
9 the ACC and using vet's offices here. That should  
10 tell you something. I brought 120 animals myself  
11 over from Thailand and got them all homes here. That  
12 cost-- that would have cost me the same amount of  
13 money to save 20 animals here.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I appreciate your  
15 testimony. Thank you so much.

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you to this  
18 panel. The next panel is Natasha Reznik. Oh, wait,  
19 did I-- Dana Jacobs? No, she came up before. Maybe  
20 she wasn't here. Clara Corey [sp?], Maddy Johnson--  
21 Samaddar-Johnson [sp?], Roberto Bonelli, and Anna  
22 Gauthier. First panelist, go ahead.

23 NATASHA REZNIK: Hello, my name's Natasha  
24 Reznik, and I want to thank this committee for  
25 holding and addressing the need for low-cost

1  
2 spay/neuter and vet services for New York City  
3 residents and rescuers to help the animals stay in  
4 their homes and get animals off the streets. And I  
5 want to underline the importance to pass the bill to  
6 stop the sale from self-breeders, because New York  
7 City-- a New York education law requires elementary  
8 schools to teach students the necessity of  
9 controlling the proliferation of animals which are  
10 subsequently abandoned and caused to suffer extreme  
11 cruelty. Humane education is mandated in New York  
12 Schools for all elementary students but it is not  
13 promoted or enforced. And we should stress that  
14 breeders selling cute baby animals have no regard for  
15 third animals' health or provide healthy or  
16 spay/neuter services. In addition, encourage New  
17 York City schools to advertise flyers of the  
18 wonderful animals for adoption that showcase many  
19 good girls and boy animals that ended up in their  
20 situations, and help the community see that adopting  
21 is better than buying, that spay/neuter helps animals  
22 live longer, healthier lives, and low-cost  
23 spay/neuter and vet services helps communities and  
24 neighborhoods get resources, therefore reducing  
25 homeless animals off the streets. New York City can



1  
2 be a model for compassion and respect to all animals,  
3 and we could start with passing Ryder's Law. Thank  
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
6 panelist.

7 DANA JACOBS: My name is Dana Jacobs and  
8 I'm a resident of Bed-Stuy in District 36. Thank you  
9 very much for the opportunity to speak to the Council  
10 today. I'm here on behalf of Neighborhood Animal  
11 Rescue Network, or NARN. We are an organized group  
12 of about 75 animal rescuers living in central  
13 Brooklyn, spanning Bed-Stuy, Ocean Hill, Crown  
14 Heights and some neighboring areas. We focus on  
15 spaying and neutering cats to lower the overall  
16 population of feral cats, giving them healthier  
17 lives, rescuing abandoned pets that have been put out  
18 on the street, and assisting community members who  
19 ask for help getting vet care for their own pets.  
20 Most members of NARN, including myself, got started  
21 in rescue the same way. We noticed cats suffering in  
22 our neighborhoods, and when we researched what  
23 agencies and organizations we might call for help,  
24 many of us discovered the same thing. No city agency  
25 exists to help these cats. I myself went on social

1  
2 media. I found Heidi who you heard from earlier and  
3 got involved from there. In the last five years,  
4 NARN has rescued spayed and/or neutered about 1,500  
5 cats, a drop in the bucket, but certainly something  
6 to be proud of. Consider that we are not a  
7 traditional public-facing nonprofit. Rather, we are  
8 a network of regular New Yorkers and some formal  
9 rescue organizations who operate like a mutual aid  
10 group. We are bakers, policy advocates, artists,  
11 operations managers, sales professionals, and youth  
12 education professionals. Rescue is not our fulltime  
13 job, and in fact often takes away from our fulltime  
14 jobs. It's not a hobby. It's a service that we are  
15 volunteering in place of organized services. Like  
16 you've heard, many of us are self-funded, crowd-  
17 funding the money to cover the cost of rescue, and  
18 our collective was formed to help the many cats who  
19 see struggling outside. It's clear that widespread  
20 access to affordable spay/neuter and basic vet care  
21 can be hugely consequential. You know, in Brooklyn  
22 alone we've seen Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare  
23 Coalition, Flatbush Vet, Pioneer Low-Cost Vet Care,  
24 and ASPCA Brooklyn Chapter has been foundational for  
25 our work. I'd lastly just like to say and highlight

1  
2 one particular issue around dumped pets. Nearly a  
3 quarter of the cats we rescued in the last two years  
4 were abandoned pets. Finding themselves outside  
5 suddenly, these abandoned pets often lacked the  
6 skills to find food and shelter, and the ask is the  
7 same to our group every time from community members.  
8 It's a photo of an animal huddled, scared, and a  
9 urgent ask. Can somebody intake? Does somebody have  
10 room in their bathroom? I myself have hosted 47 of  
11 these types of cats over the past two years, and the  
12 epidemic as you have heard is very real. Animals are  
13 suffering. My hope today is that this hearing is a  
14 part of a paradigm shift in the City of New York, and  
15 we're grateful for your time and attention. Thank  
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
18 panelist.

19 DANA HICE: Hi, my name is Dana Hice  
20 [sp?] and I'm here on behalf of Claire Corey and  
21 Brooklyn Animal Action, and I'm also a member of NARN  
22 with Dana Jacobs. Brooklyn Animal Action is a rescue  
23 that's been going for over 14 years. Our hope was  
24 that this situation was going to get better, not  
25 worse. Brooklyn Animal Action vets and adopts out 600

1  
2 to 1,000 cats a year. Our costs in 2010 were  
3 \$100,000 and they're now \$350,000, and our intake--  
4 our intake capacity did not increase. Cost did. We  
5 are volunteer-run and we are all working fulltime  
6 jobs. I personally got involved in this when I moved  
7 here from Australia five years ago and I lived across  
8 the street from a NYCHA complex. There was over 40  
9 intact cats living in a cockroach infested crawl  
10 space and I had no idea how to help them. I quickly  
11 realized that there was no city agency that was going  
12 to come in with a solution, but Brooklyn Animal  
13 Action did. We don't get paid for this, and we have  
14 to beg for money to cover these bills, and we run  
15 ourselves ragged trying to help as many as we can,  
16 but we'll never get there without help. Our inbox at  
17 Brooklyn Animal Action currently sits at about 25,000  
18 unread emails. We just can't get to them all, but  
19 boy do we try. We are drowning, and I know for a  
20 fact that there are rescuers here today that have had  
21 to dip in and out of this meeting because we're  
22 running to vet appointments, we're taking calls from  
23 emergency vets, we're consulting with foster homes,  
24 and we're trying to decide if we can actually intake  
25 that cat that we've just been begged to take in, all

1  
2 while working our fulltime jobs. This is a city  
3 issue and we're excited to see these issues are now  
4 on the agenda, and we're hopeful for the solutions  
5 that my come from this. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
7 much. Next?

8 MADDY SAMADDAR JOHNSON: Thank you,  
9 Council Members, for this opportunity. I'm Maddy  
10 Samaddar Johnson. I'm a tri-racial, multilingual  
11 woman who lives in District 39. I've been rescuing  
12 animals, cats, dogs, birds, [inaudible] from the time  
13 I was a little girl and continue to do so even today  
14 though it has focused more on cats and dogs in the  
15 past two decades whether in NYC or in the several  
16 other countries I've lived and worked at including  
17 helping animals in India, Canada, the U.K., Ukraine,  
18 Afghanistan, Sudan, Madagascar, and several others on  
19 my own and wit rescue groups. I run the newly-  
20 launched group Park Slope Cats which was the cover  
21 story of the local mag. Recently, I also  
22 successfully resolved a 40-cat hoarding situation  
23 within two weeks after their 85-year-old human passed  
24 away, and it should have been a Department of Health  
25 issue. A simple spay/neuter of the original two cats

1  
2 25 years ago would have prevented the situation. All  
3 the issues have already been covered by others, so  
4 this is just more of an appeal. Those in the rescue  
5 world, especially the individual ones like myself  
6 without a big volunteer network have zero funding and  
7 have been working without a break, depleting our  
8 finances, mental and physical health and running on  
9 dry, but never giving up. Despite insurmountable  
10 odds and low sleep we have kept going. Every day I  
11 receive innumerable calls and texts to help out  
12 dumped, stray, feral, injured animals and step in as  
13 individual rescuers-- we have to work several hours  
14 day and night along with our day jobs. I work in  
15 architecture and urban planning, and I think you  
16 should get designers who have hands-on experience  
17 with animals when you design the facilities. No, we  
18 are not crazy cat ladies. We are ladies who rescue  
19 animals due to the compassion in our heart and are  
20 getting driven crazy due to the lack of sustainable  
21 support. The stories I could say-- bottle babies,  
22 abuse, seniors, but similar to many have already  
23 heard before, so I'll spare those. We all know we  
24 cannot-- cannot-- adopt, foster our way out of  
25 homeless cat suffering. The only way is dedicated

1  
2 extensive, compulsory spay/neuter and building a  
3 support network which can help in funding, educating,  
4 and solving. The best way to prevent suffering is to  
5 stop it at the source. Why do we do this? Are we  
6 masochists? I'm wrapping up, don't worry. No, the  
7 real reason is that someone has to. Throughout the  
8 world, the ultimate suffering imparted through human  
9 cruelty, apathy, and destructive activity, regardless  
10 of the human's race, geography, region of the globe  
11 is always borne by innocent animals. And I suppose  
12 as much as a cynic or a realist as I am to keep  
13 going, we have to focus on finding the kinds ones,  
14 the compassionate ones of the human species among  
15 you, those who help the most innocent and the most  
16 vulnerable, the voiceless animals. New York City, we  
17 can do this. Please institute city-funded high-  
18 volume, low-cost spay neuter. I'll just end by saying  
19 that even if the human rescuers, pet owners and--

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] You  
21 have to wrap up.

22 MADDY SAMADDAR JOHNSON: may growl,  
23 scratch, hiss, piss, get territorial with each other,  
24 we are all united in one front. We want the City to  
25 help us with high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter in a

1  
2 functional, honest, efficient way, and equitable way  
3 to all, the ones who need it, not just to the  
4 lobbyist.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
6 panelist.

7 ROBERTO BONELLI: good afternoon. My  
8 name is Roberto Bonelli. I live in Queens and I run  
9 an Advocacy and TNR group called the Animals  
10 Battalion. This summer has not been a pleasant one  
11 as I've struggled to get affordable veterinary  
12 appointments for spay and neuter and medical  
13 services. In the course of my rescue work, so far  
14 this summer I've pulled over 20 kittens from the  
15 streets. Most have found homes, but not all. A few  
16 weeks ago I responded to a call in Sunnyside to trap  
17 a cat that was severely slashed from its shoulder  
18 blade to shoulder blade across its chest. The cat  
19 required emergency services. The medical bills for  
20 the rescue group that took possession of the cat,  
21 Astoria Cat Rescue, have been quite high, over  
22 \$6,000. Situations like those are typical for anyone  
23 who does rescue in New York City. We attempt to save  
24 lives while navigating through a problematic city.  
25 Let's not kid ourselves. Life here is extremely



1  
2 expensive, and it's not going to get better anytime  
3 soon. With skyrocketing costs of living expenses,  
4 people are just abandoning their cats. This past  
5 Sunday, the New York Post covered a story about a  
6 100-cat colony by Shay Stadium. These problems will  
7 not be solved by just educating the public.  
8 Situations like that can only be fixed by the moral  
9 resolve and the work ethic of New York City's rescue  
10 community. We do, however, have monetary  
11 limitations. There's only so much we can finance  
12 through our everyday jobs. We can put in the  
13 volunteer hours, but we need affordable veterinary  
14 services to control the homeless animal population  
15 and to hopefully dissuade lower-income residents from  
16 abandoning their pets. If our government can't  
17 provide low-cost veterinary care, this city will just  
18 become a giant dumping ground of unwanted pets.  
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. I want  
21 to thank this panel. Appreciate it. We're going to  
22 take a five-minute break, because we have a lot more  
23 folks to testify, and just need to do a couple  
24 things. Thank you.

25 [break]

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, we're ready  
3 to start again. So, the next panel is Marilyn  
4 Zucker, India Mazzaro, Aleksandra Slomska, Lili,  
5 Trapper Aid, Dan Teachout. Okay, first panelist.

6 MARILYN ZUCKER: My name is Marilyn  
7 Zucker. I'm honored to speak to the City Council  
8 Health Committee today addressing the state of animal  
9 rescue. I applaud Justin Brannan on Bill 1018 which  
10 will make it harder for backyard breeders to  
11 circumvent the new law which prohibits the retail  
12 sale of dogs and cats, and I urge you to pass it. But  
13 dogs and cats aren't the only New York City non-human  
14 resident who desperately need our help, your help.  
15 As a Jewish person I'm saddened each year to know  
16 chickens starve and suffer in distress in cramped  
17 crates for the annual ritual of Kaporos and in wet  
18 markets across the city, even as bird flu spreads  
19 rampantly. Just this week, the New York Times  
20 featured an expose of New York City's wet markets and  
21 the danger they pose to public health and the  
22 barbaric and cruel treatment these poor animals are  
23 forced to endure. Also this week, the New York Post  
24 exposed birds, rats, and pigs being intentionally  
25 tortured. Their torment ignored in sadistic animal

1  
2 sacrifice rituals in Howard Beach Queens with full  
3 knowledge of authorities. And elderly, malnourished  
4 former race horses, and Amish work horses continue to  
5 lug 3,000 pound carriages no matter how they feel  
6 even while-- well, I wrote at this very moment, but  
7 we know that the trial has been postponed until  
8 October-- carriage horse owner Ian McKeever stands  
9 trial for criminal animal abuse in a downtown  
10 courthouse for the torture and death of Ryder, one of  
11 many carriage horses owned by Ian and his brother,  
12 and despite the fact that 71 percent of New Yorkers  
13 say they'd like to see the carriages banned. We've  
14 been exhaustively fighting for an end to this abusive  
15 industry since 2014, and I have an article from 10  
16 years ago, 2014 when we trying to end the carriages  
17 then. I'm urging you, pleading with you Chair  
18 Schulman to please hold a hearing for Ryder's Law  
19 Intro 967. As our representatives you have the task  
20 of making sure New York remains a great and humane  
21 city for all of its residents. Please protect and  
22 rescue the most vulnerable, the animals. You're  
23 their voice and their only hope.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
25 panelist.

1  
2 DANIEL TEACHOUT: Good afternoon. My  
3 name is Daniel Teachout. I'm a longtime resident of  
4 Inwood, and Carmen De La Rosa is my Council Member.  
5 I'm a 20-year monthly supporter of the ASPCA. I have  
6 a cat colony that I maintain in Inwood, and across  
7 the fence is a dangerous dog that recently killed a  
8 young cat that I had never seen. I filed two 311  
9 reports and had a strong discussion with the owner.  
10 This is an ongoing daily concern to say the least. I  
11 am certified as a TNR person. In 2020, my mother-in-  
12 law took in a pregnant feral cat and when it came  
13 time to vet and spay and neuter I was horrified by  
14 the cost. I was unemployed because of the pandemic.  
15 I reached out to rescue groups, but they were buried  
16 with requests. One group, Kitty Kind, got one of my  
17 kittens adopted, and I thank them. Finally, the  
18 federal pandemic insurance fund kicked in and I was  
19 able to spay and neuter all of the cats. I don't know  
20 what I would have done except gone into debt. I don't  
21 know. Here we are four years later with few low-cost  
22 spay and neuter options available. The effort a  
23 person needs to go through to help to stop this  
24 endless cycle of misery is almost impossible. It  
25 should not be so difficult to do the right thing. We

1 created this problem and we certainly can fix it.

2 Thank you.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
5 much. Next panelist.

6 INDIA MAZZARO: Sorry, I've never used  
7 one of these before. My name is India Mazzaro and I  
8 represent Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition.  
9 We operate the Brooklyn Cat Café and BBAWC rescue  
10 clinic. BBAWC would now like to highlight  
11 individuals and small group rescuers who have stepped  
12 up to fill the gaps left by the inadequate shelter  
13 system and lack of accessible vet care while the city  
14 and its agencies are shielded from the harsh reality  
15 of the New York City cat crisis. A sadly common  
16 story, a family facing eviction is forced to leave  
17 their pet cat behind after being turned away from a  
18 full shelter. NYCHA employees then put the cat  
19 outside with no shelter or food where it ends up  
20 either critically ill or injured due to a lack of  
21 survival skills outside. Most rescuers get calls  
22 about situations like this multiple times a week, and  
23 knowing the cats have no other options take on the  
24 cost and effort required to get the cats fixed and  
25 adopted. This is draining mentally, emotionally,

1  
2 physically, and financially, yet rescuers feel unable  
3 to stop or even take a break because they know that  
4 no one else will help these cats. Until long-term  
5 humane policies and programs are established the city  
6 can lend immediate support rescuers by enforcing  
7 existing laws and policies. AG and Markets Law 355  
8 prohibits abandoning an animal and NYCHA policy  
9 states unowned animals are to be taken to shelters.  
10 We need to empower NYCHA employees to bring pets to  
11 the city shelter rather than leaving them  
12 unsterilized on premises. We need to help residents  
13 comply with NYCHA policies requiring animals to be  
14 spayed and neutered so if a cat does end up outside  
15 it cannot reproduce freely. Shut down parties  
16 operating as unlicensed breeders such as bodegas,  
17 private breeders, and people looking to make money  
18 selling kittens on Craigslist and Facebook  
19 Marketplace. We need to fine pet owners who let  
20 their intact, unvaccinated cats outside, and we need  
21 to leverage dog licensing fees and other fines to  
22 fund the Animal Overpopulation Fund. And finally, we  
23 need to increase or provide human education in  
24 schools to encourage children to learn about adopting  
25 and animal care. Every day of inaction is another

1  
2 day that homeless cats suffer and another day that  
3 you are failing your constituents and the community.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
5 much. Next panelist.

6 ALEKSANDRA SLOMSKA: Good afternoon City  
7 Council and Committee Members. My name is Aleksandra  
8 Slomska. I am user interface designer and one of the  
9 founders of Trapper Aid platform. Today, you have  
10 heard of the urgent need for city-funded high-volume  
11 spay and neuter services and additional resources to  
12 combat the growing cat overpopulation crisis. Large-  
13 scale solutions require a data-driven approach and  
14 our platform, Trapper Aid, provides the foundation  
15 for comprehensive solution. Currently, there is no  
16 centralized evidence-based system to address this  
17 issue leading to fragmented founding, inefficient  
18 resource use, and public health risk from unmanaged  
19 feral cat populations. Our team can change this by  
20 unifying data and providing insights to justify new  
21 budget allocations for clinics, rescue organizations,  
22 certified individuals, and eventually colony  
23 caretakers, guiding us toward a future free from cat  
24 over-population. Trapper Aid stands for those who  
25 are currently unseen. Our platform benefits

1  
2 everyone, government agencies, shelters, large  
3 organizations, veterinary clinics, and especially  
4 those individuals and rescues who perform TNR. These  
5 amazing people fight every day to save and help cats  
6 in need, often with limited resources and  
7 recognition. For the past one year, our team has  
8 been working on a platform that will revolutionize  
9 the efforts. Our plan would not only help  
10 demonstrate the value of the work, but also advocate  
11 for more founding support and awareness from local  
12 communities and larger institutions.

13 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
14 much. Next panelist.

15 LILI KOMITSKY: Good afternoon Council  
16 Members and community participants. My name is Lili  
17 Komitsky. I'm a health informaticist [sic], data  
18 scientist, and one of the founders of Trapper Aid.  
19 Today I'm here to provide a brief overview of our  
20 team's upcoming objectives and plans. In its first  
21 phase, Trapper Aid acts as an all-in-one platform for  
22 managing appointments and services for rescues and  
23 certified individuals, consolidating and streamlining  
24 scheduling and certification verification across all  
25 clinics. For clinics, Trapper Aid consolidates a



1  
2 specialized subset of low cost services and users,  
3 reducing administrative burdens with automated  
4 processes and saving valuable time. With their  
5 support and participation, our system will enhance  
6 efficiency and generate critical data which is  
7 currently missing on trends, demands, and regional  
8 needs, providing the city with valuable insights to  
9 allocate funds and resources more effectively. After  
10 a successful launch, we will introduce a mobile  
11 feature to centralize coordination for certified  
12 individuals and rescues, streamlining tasks like  
13 trapping, transport, holding space while generating  
14 field data to further provide future funding and  
15 resource allocation. Our solution can scale across  
16 boroughs, but for now we propose starting with a  
17 pilot program in Brooklyn where there is a high feral  
18 cat population and existing infrastructure. We see  
19 community and city support along with modest  
20 investment to cover our pilot's operational and  
21 development cost, ensuring our platform is free for  
22 all users. This investment could come from the city,  
23 private donors, investors, or anyone committed to  
24 addressing this persistent problem with a modern  
25 solution. We welcome your feedback and support in

1  
2 building a better future for our community and the  
3 animals we care for. To learn more or to express  
4 interest please email us at [trapperaid@gmail.com](mailto:trapperaid@gmail.com).  
5 Thank you for your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
7 much. Thank you. I want to thank this panel.  
8 Appreciate you testifying. The next panel, Patricia  
9 Bautista [sp?], Erica Parks [sp?], Frania Shelley-  
10 Grielen, Debra Kalish,-- sorry if I'm mispronouncing--  
11 - Laura MacAvoy [sp?], and Candice Kumai Gwiazdowski  
12 [sp?].

13 UNIDENTIFIED: Hello?

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yeah.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Alright, sorry if I repeat  
16 anything. I'm echoing a lot of what I've heard  
17 today, and I'm reading off my testimony. I'm a  
18 volunteer rescuer and pet owner who lives from  
19 paycheck to paycheck often struggling with the high  
20 cost associated with veterinary care. My cat Lucy is  
21 not just a pet. She's not just an emotional support  
22 animal. She's my only family that I come home to and  
23 a crucial part of my life. Apologies for the  
24 overture, but I do so to speak for others going  
25 through the same. I've been diagnosed with

1  
2 Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Major Depressive  
3 Disorder, and Lucy plays an essential role in  
4 managing my symptoms. Her presence and support are  
5 invaluable to my mental health and wellbeing.  
6 Recently, I faced significant financial challenges  
7 while trying to provide Lucy with necessary  
8 veterinary care. Fortunately, I was able to access  
9 affordable care-- or affordable services at Flatbush  
10 Vets which made a critical difference in her health.  
11 However, not everyone has access to such low-cost  
12 care and many pet owners and rescuers struggle to  
13 provide for their animals due to prohibitive costs.  
14 To ensure that more people like me can afford  
15 essential veterinary services and support our efforts  
16 in rescuing and caring for animals, it is crucial  
17 that the New York City government allocates  
18 substantial funding for high-volume free and/or low-  
19 cost spay and neuter programs and affordable vet  
20 care. Despite the financial strain, I commuted one  
21 hour on the train to ensure Lucy received that care  
22 she deserved. This experience highlighted both the  
23 critical need for affordable care and the lengths to  
24 which pet owners will go to protect their beloved  
25 companions. Solutions? Let's work on providing the

1 same example Flatbush Vets has offered in all  
2 boroughs of New York City. Like previously stated,  
3 we need the city as a partner that's focused on  
4 electing and employing experienced leaders to ensure  
5 that funding is properly allocated to the rescuers  
6 and programs. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very,  
9 very much. If you have something more extended, you  
10 can submit it. You can submit the testimony, and you  
11 can send it to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). You have  
12 72 hours to do that so you can expand on what you  
13 said. More than happy to--

14 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Next panelist.

16 FRANIA SHELLEY-GRIELEN: Thank you. My  
17 name is Frania Shelley-Grielen. I'm an Applied  
18 Animal Behaviorist residing in Morningside Heights  
19 and working in New York City. Research and  
20 experience tell us that behavior concerns are among  
21 the top reasons for surrender to animal shelters and  
22 for consulting animal professionals, but it is  
23 surrender to shelters that happens more frequently  
24 than addressing a behavior issue, and when surrender  
25 is not possible as in shelter capacity not allowing,

1 we see what we are seeing now, more animals, mainly  
2 cats, being dumped or turned out of homes onto public  
3 spaces. Former house cats are not socialized or  
4 equipped to the very hard life of living on the  
5 streets, nor are the street cats equipped for the  
6 life they're born into. Most of them will not make  
7 it, and that journey towards death is fraught with  
8 illness, starvation, predation, and savagery. TNR  
9 organizations and rescues do tremendous heavy lifting  
10 in the city to meliorate the onslaught, but it is  
11 simply not and never enough, not enough people on the  
12 other end of rescue, and forever homes may not be  
13 forever, or no one would be getting surrendered or  
14 dumped in the first place. Neutering companion  
15 animals and managing behavior are vital to ensuring  
16 permanence in homes. Neither can happen without  
17 support, cultural acceptance and access to resources.  
18 There is a law in place that speaks directly to this.  
19 New York State Education Law 809 requires  
20 "instruction to be given in every elementary school  
21 in the humane treatment and protection of animals, as  
22 well as the necessity of controlling proliferation of  
23 animals which are subsequently abandoned and caused  
24 to suffer extreme cruelty." Strong language, but we  
25

1  
2 need to ask whether or not such a law is just on the  
3 books or is implemented in today's classrooms or  
4 yesterday's or tomorrow's. Research on students in  
5 classrooms where humane education was offered showed  
6 it to be effective significantly. We are morally,  
7 legally, and ethically obligated to implement.  
8 Let's.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you so much.  
10 Next panelist.

11 DEBRA KALISH: Hi, my name is Debra  
12 Kalish. I'm a dog volunteer at ACC Manhattan. I live  
13 in District Six and my City Council Rep is Gale  
14 Brewer. I've been volunteering at ACC for over three  
15 years, seven years somewhere else. The  
16 overpopulation situation is the worst I've ever seen.  
17 It's a tragic, unending parade of surrendered and  
18 abandoned dogs. Many of them come in ungroomed,  
19 unvetted, underfed and now unaltered, largely a  
20 function of the insane cost of New York City vet  
21 care. Unaltered dogs in shelter contribute to  
22 behavioral problems. On a good day, shelter dogs can  
23 deteriorate from stress, noise, fear, not enough  
24 exercise. Unaltered dogs can exacerbate bad  
25 behavior, leading to more emergency placement pleas

1 and more euthanasia. It's just simply heartbreaking.  
2 Unaltered dogs have medical issues, too. I recently  
3 teamed with an ACC rescue partner to put a seven-  
4 year-old unaltered male who now needs a perinatal  
5 hernia operation to fix his very serious GI problems.  
6 It will cost thousands of dollars. So unnecessary  
7 for us, and so avoidable for this poor dog. Here are  
8 some things that I think the City can do to kind of  
9 help this overpopulation crisis and add to  
10 spay/neuter services. Fund existing nonprofits to  
11 expand their services. They're already doing the  
12 work. Work with board of vet schools to introduce  
13 spay/neuter rotations into their curricula. Give vet  
14 students course credit or tuition breaks for  
15 semester-long spay/neuter work in the City. Jointly  
16 fund a program to train city vet techs to perform  
17 spay/neuters throughout the city and pay them to do  
18 so. Use tax breaks or other incentives to incent  
19 private vets and corporate chains to perform a  
20 minimum number of low-cost spay/neuters per year.  
21 There are too many unwanted animals in New York City.  
22 We can't rescue our way out of this crisis. We need  
23 more affordable, accessible services. Please help us  
24  
25

1  
2 help the animals of New York City. Thank you very  
3 much.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
5 much. Next panelist.

6 CANDICE KUMAI: Hi, Lynn. Hi, Joann.  
7 I'm Candice Kumai. I am a volunteer frequently with  
8 various cat rescue between NYC ACC and Little  
9 Wanderers in NYC among many others. I love spending  
10 time getting to know the individuals that are at each  
11 of these organizations. Professionally, I write and  
12 report on the Today show and for Vogue, Bon Appetit,  
13 etcetera. Throughout my years of volunteering I've  
14 seen firsthand the dire need for accessible  
15 spay/neuter and veterinary services across New York.  
16 I know this because when I was 20 I used a low-cost  
17 clinic to spay my own cat, Cici. I had her for 20  
18 years. She saved my life numerous times. I hope  
19 that one day when I have a 20-year-old daughter that  
20 she'd be able to do the same thing here in New York  
21 and experience the love of a companion pet. Flash to  
22 now at 42 I'm going on set to record about health and  
23 wellness on the Today Show, and nobody knows that I  
24 had just had to euthanize a cat that was in an  
25 accident on behalf of one of the rescue groups I'm



1  
2 with. It is literally hours before some of us step  
3 into our professional positions that we have to do  
4 this kind of work and put on a brave face every day.  
5 I also urge you to put on that golden standard that  
6 we know that New York has to be an example for the  
7 rest of the world to follow. I most recently have  
8 read horrible articles in places like New York  
9 Magazine, Curved [sic], Vox, The Cut that exacerbated  
10 situation that all of us in animal rescue are up  
11 against. They write horrible things about cats,  
12 dogs, and animal rescue, and I urge them to really  
13 seek out the truth and get to know all of us  
14 neighbors together in our community. Thank you so  
15 much for your time. It really truly means the world  
16 to all of us.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
18 much. Next panelist.

19 LAURA MACAVOY: Hi, my name is Laura  
20 MacAvoy and I'm the Volunteer Director of Data and  
21 Policy Strategy for Puppy Kitty New York City in  
22 Queens, and I call it my second fulltime job that I  
23 don't get paid for. As you're hearing today, animal  
24 welfare is an incredibly large and complex issue in  
25 New York City and while many rescues are working

1  
2 tirelessly to solve it, we can't do it without  
3 resources and support. I'd like to tell you a story  
4 today about a kitten named Ticonderoga Number Two  
5 Pencil. I name a lot of cats. And he came to me  
6 with his siblings at a couple of days old as a  
7 bottle-baby after their finder took them from their  
8 mom, fed them cow's milk, and then realized that they  
9 were in over their head. I tried for several days to  
10 keep him alive, getting up every two hours to bottle  
11 feed while working my fulltime non-rescue job, but  
12 eventually it was clear that he was actively dying.  
13 I took him to a very expensive emergency clinic where  
14 his veins were so small and dehydrated that they had  
15 to euthanize him with an injection to the stomach  
16 while I held him in the palm of my hand. But he  
17 didn't have to die like that. If his parents had  
18 been spayed and neutered, he never would have  
19 suffered like that for his small, short 10 days of  
20 life. And those cats are probably still out there  
21 having more litters. This isn't a unique story.  
22 Kittens die like this every day, whether it's  
23 outside, in homes, in shelters, and the only way out  
24 of this is high-volume, low-cost, or free spay or  
25 neuter for both individuals and rescues. We need

1  
2 government support for widespread TNR programs,  
3 education on community and bodega cats, actual  
4 enforcement on the ban on companion animal breeding  
5 and selling, enforcement of animal cruelty laws under  
6 AG and Markets, and educating the public about the  
7 importance of responsible pet ownership and what that  
8 entails, including why spay and neuter is necessary,  
9 not just making it affordable. Thank you for your  
10 time and opportunity to discuss this issue.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you all, and  
12 thank you all for your volunteering and everything  
13 that you do. We've heard-- we hear all of you, and  
14 we're going to take that back. So, just know that,  
15 okay? Thank you very much. The next panel is  
16 Porsche Jones, Sarah Hauser, Christine Kenneally,  
17 Nora Marino, Margo Holland-- oh, I'm sorry-- Margaret  
18 Holland, Leslie Ramos. You know what, before we do  
19 that, we're going to add a couple more since they're  
20 not here. Just so we can get out of here quicker.  
21 The last name is Cohen Santiago. I can't make out the  
22 first name. Is that person here? No, okay. Sheila  
23 Sanchez, come sit at the panel. And then Joan Novak  
24 [sp?]. No? Oh, she left, okay. Helene Hartman? And  
25 Bill Sacrey [sp?]. Oh, never mind, we're full.

1  
2 We're full. For the next panel, okay. So, the first  
3 panelist, you ready?

4 SHEILA SANCHEZ: I came here prepared for  
5 two minutes. My name is Sheila Sanchez. I am part  
6 of the Northwest Bronx Democrats, and I was the  
7 President of Francis Albert [sic] Park, but more than  
8 anything else I'm an animal lover and a rescuer.  
9 After hearing my fellowship rescuers, I realized too  
10 after the pandemic I lost track with what's going on.  
11 And I realized [inaudible] as two people really, the  
12 pet owner and the rescuer. For 20 years I lived in  
13 the same place and I was lucky enough that my  
14 landlord loved cats, so he allowed me to practically  
15 have a rescue in the house. I never asked for help  
16 other than what is offered for other rescues, or like  
17 my friend here used to call the cats angels in the  
18 neighborhood. I fed them. I took them to the ASPCA  
19 truck. I got help of the neighbors to actually  
20 borrow me their Medicaid cards so I could afford to  
21 spay the animals, because I never had the money even  
22 though I have two jobs and my own little business.  
23 But I lost my house in 22, and eight of my cats.  
24 Only two are still with me. My [inaudible] to what's  
25 supposed to be a foster for 10 days and has been 13

1  
2 years now, and my last feral. So I couldn't live  
3 there when I knew that they were going to condemn the  
4 house. I'm sorry. The other five, two were 18-year-  
5 old and I had to ask for help and I had to surrender  
6 it to senior cat home, because I couldn't take care  
7 of the cost anymore. My Gypsy [sic] died from sudden  
8 kidney failure, and my Gia [sic] to what they think  
9 for a fatal seizure. At the time, I couldn't afford  
10 the vet. I still cannot afford a vet. The last one,  
11 my Mallifica [sic]. We were almost able to get to  
12 the ER, but she died anyway, I was told it because of  
13 the poison they used to kill the mosquitos for kidney  
14 failure. I finally broke economically and  
15 emotionally.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: if you could  
17 summarizes, please? Thank you.

18 SHEILA SANCHEZ: Yes. Over a year ago we  
19 rescue a dog, my Lucy. She most rescue me. She was  
20 supposed to be my support animal. She [inaudible].  
21 She has been stolen from a homeless mentally-ill  
22 person who wasn't able to take care of her, and fed  
23 her cat food and kept her in a small bag all the  
24 time. Thanks to [inaudible] with other rescuers, she  
25 came at me. Thanks to the community work of rescuers

1  
2 I was able to get her vaccines and neuter her, but I  
3 shouldn't have had to wait six months. I should have  
4 been able to go to an accessible low clinic. For 20  
5 years I have done rescue. I don't know what I would  
6 have done if not for the ASPCA's trucks, but that  
7 wasn't enough. For 20 years I push for the animal  
8 shelter in the Bronx, but that's just not enough.  
9 Organizing with other rescuers, trapping, releasing,  
10 it is not enough. every single spring, every single  
11 station [sic], really, I would have new sets of  
12 kittens that needed help and a [inaudible] hungry new  
13 cat leaving with me or if I found a new home. When  
14 my baby Lucy was hit by a drunk driver, she died in  
15 my arms, because it was a holiday. It's impossible  
16 to find where to get your animal if something were  
17 wrong. Here I am today asking for more support, more  
18 help. In this city, nobody should go with any  
19 [inaudible] go through, but more than anything else I  
20 am asking for the DOH to have a divorce for the  
21 animal welfare, because that marriage is not working  
22 for [inaudible]. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
24 much. Next panelist.

25

1  
2 HELENE HARTMAN-KUTNOWSKY: Hi. I guess  
3 it's good evening at this point. My name is Helene  
4 Hartman-Kutnowsky. I live in the Bronx. I'm a member  
5 of Community Board Seven. I'm on the Environmental  
6 Committee. I have three cats that are all rescues  
7 from my building that my neighbors have put out, and  
8 I also feed two feral cats. I don't do what most of  
9 the people here do. I'm in awe of all of them. I  
10 just want to say though that I think the education  
11 component really needs to be stressed. Last month, I  
12 did rescue two cats. One was a little kitten that my  
13 neighbor was carrying out. She was taking it to the  
14 bodega. Unfortunately, it seems like a lot of people  
15 think that's an appropriate place to take an animal,  
16 and fortunately, Iris Lugo [sp?], who's a cat  
17 rescuer-- she takes care of kittens in our community.  
18 She's marvelous. I was able to call her and she did  
19 take little red head. So that was a happy story, but  
20 I don't know whether it's education. I think it might  
21 be partly lack of knowledge as to where to take  
22 animals. She said if the bodega doesn't want the  
23 animal, she was going to put it on Marshall [sic]  
24 Parkway. So, we were pretty horrified. And the same  
25 month, I-- my neighbor called me because she found an

1 animal in our courtyard. It looked like a dried mop.  
2 I don't think I would have even recognized it as an  
3 animal. Fortunately, again, Bronx Tails-- I called  
4 Betty Arce. Jamie Lehman [sp?] took the cat and it  
5 looks like a whole different animal now, alright.  
6 But again, I'm fortunate in that. I know who to call  
7 and they were able to help. I think what we need to  
8 do is-- again, this is what I'm thinking with my  
9 landlord, but I think we need to maybe consider it  
10 for leases in New York City. We need some kind of  
11 rider that basically outlines that you cannot put  
12 animals out. These are the places to go. This is  
13 where you got to get help. whether it's a rider-- I  
14 don't think you're going to put it on leases, but it  
15 needs to be done in a citywide way, because it's  
16 really a pandemic, and we know what Gandhi says about  
17 how a society is treated, how we treat our animals--  
18 I'm not quoting-- is really what we're about. We  
19 need to do better. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Next  
22 panelist.

23 SARAH HAUSER: My name is Sarah Hauser,  
24 and I'm happy to be able to share with you today.  
25 I've worked with animals in shelters and rescue



1 environments for many years, sharing modalities such  
2 as Tea Touch and Reiki combined with socialization  
3 techniques, specializing in fearful and feral cats.  
4 These environments that span several boroughs and  
5 many neighborhoods. I've worked with animals in  
6 larger shelters, with individual rescuers, with  
7 fosters, and in vet's offices. I also work with  
8 people and their rescued pets in their homes, and  
9 these experiences have allowed me to see the animal  
10 rescue world from many perspectives, and to see how  
11 the current situation is impacting so many people and  
12 animals. The pandemic started a chain reaction of  
13 crises in the animal rescue and animal care, a world  
14 already so stressed, overworked, underpaid, and  
15 overwhelmed. And during this time period, spay and  
16 neuter was pretty much on hold resulting in a huge  
17 increase in the population of animals that need help,  
18 and during this time so many people lost their jobs  
19 resulting in more people having to surrender their  
20 pets as they could no longer care for them. And  
21 many vet offices closed or have been taken over by  
22 larger corporations whose priorities may not be as  
23 well-oriented as private practices, and the remaining  
24 vets not run by these corporations are overworked.  
25

1  
2 And the prices-- sorry. Prices of vet care have  
3 risen and the rising prices and less availability of  
4 reasonably-priced vet care are impacting shelters,  
5 rescues, and pet parents. The whole system is  
6 overwhelmed in every way and so many individual  
7 rescuers who I know are working tirelessly now more  
8 than ever, stretched way past their limits, often  
9 paying for everything out of their own pockets. The  
10 NYC animal rescue community deserves support and  
11 funding to continue the important work that they do.  
12 We need the New York City government to allocate  
13 funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and  
14 affordable veterinary care for anyone in need. Help  
15 the rescuers to help the animals, and help pet  
16 parents to be able to keep their pets. Pets are our  
17 family, and we want everyone to be able to afford to  
18 care for them and keep them in their homes.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
20 much. Next panelist.

21 CHRISTINE KENNEALLY: Hi, there. My name  
22 is Christine Kenneally. I am just an individual that  
23 cats started to find and then I became a rescuer,  
24 colony taking-care-of-er and whatever else comes up.  
25 Five and a half years ago I received a very strong

1  
2 cancer diagnosis and went through major treatments  
3 and then metastasized and still going through, but I  
4 said give me a way to give back for [inaudible], and  
5 the cats, dogs, birds found me. I had been not able  
6 to work. Disability doesn't cover much, so I stay  
7 where I can. It's been in three low-income Bronx  
8 neighborhoods where it seems that people really do  
9 not know what to do with the animals and wind up on  
10 the street. I-- when have come across cruelty, the  
11 Police Department has not been very helpful. I'm not  
12 sure if I'm being heard. I guess they're busy. Okay.  
13 Like these wonderful people here I am incredibly  
14 moved by the people that are coming here, and I'm  
15 incredibly moved and really hopeful by the interest  
16 and the questions being asked, and I'm-- please,  
17 please, you know what needs to be done. I don't know  
18 how to make these things happen. Education also is  
19 key. Where I'm living now is a horror story one day  
20 after the next of people not knowing what to do, and  
21 a cat that was bone being seen by the dog in a house  
22 biting it and leaving it for four days before  
23 bringing it some place, and then not knowing where to  
24 bring it. We can't have this. How do people know  
25 where to go? Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
3 much. Next.

4 NORA MARINO: Hi, thank you so much for  
5 having this hearing and hearing us all out today. My  
6 name's Nora Marino. I'm a litigation attorney for  
7 over 20 years. I've been involved rescue and animal  
8 rights, and I'm in the law for 20 years, and I have a  
9 not-for-profit called the Legal Action Network for  
10 Animals. I don't want to repeat what's been said  
11 today. There have been very moving stories today by  
12 a lot of rescues and it's unbelievable what these  
13 people do, and I'd like to offer hopefully some ideas  
14 for solutions. Pets in housing, one of the number  
15 one reasons animals get surrendered is because  
16 they're moving to an apartment that doesn't take  
17 pets. We can't force landlords to take pets, but we  
18 can offer-- the City can offer tax incentives. How  
19 about a tax incentive? You take animals, we'll give  
20 you a break on your taxes. Now, another issue is  
21 that-- insurance. A lot of landlords don't want to  
22 take dogs, especially the big dogs which are the  
23 number one problem animal to get adopted, as one of  
24 the ACC representatives said. They need insurance.  
25 They don't want to take these animals because they're

1  
2 afraid of liability, and that's understandable. I'm  
3 an attorney, I get that, liability. So I think we  
4 need to work with the state, the New York State  
5 Department of Financial Services which regulates  
6 insurance to get some regulations in. These  
7 insurance companies have to provide dog bite  
8 insurance to landlords so landlords can then open  
9 their doors for people with animals. And I know  
10 these might seem like big objectives, but what these  
11 rescues are doing are bigger. What they're doing  
12 every day is bigger, and I'm happy to offer my  
13 assistance in any way. Vet care, another reason why  
14 animals get surrendered and a big problem with  
15 spay/neuter. Same thing, can we offer some type of  
16 tax incentive for the vets that are out there to  
17 offer low-cost and no-cost veterinary services and  
18 free spay/neuter. Can the city interject with that?  
19 instead of building whole facilities, I think it  
20 would be much more cost-effective to use the vets  
21 that are already and just give them tax incentives to  
22 do free spay/neuter or low spay/neuter-- low-cost  
23 spay/neuter. That's all I'll say about that.  
24 Breeding, breeding is really the root cause here. We  
25 can't clear a clogged sink when the faucets are

1  
2 pouring out water. We've got to do something about  
3 the breeding. There's no good breeding right now.  
4 Maybe a moratorium, maybe a year. It's just let these  
5 rescuers catch their breath. If we could issue some  
6 type of a temporary moratorium so it's kind of  
7 palatable for people, and where we have no animals  
8 can be brought into the city unless they come from a  
9 rescue, I mean that-- maybe just give these people a  
10 chance to catch their breath.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Can you sum up?

12 NORA MARINO: Yeah, I know, I'm sorry. I  
13 [inaudible] two minutes goes quick. Alright, just  
14 real quick I do want to mention that I'm also  
15 involved in dog rescue, and there's really little to  
16 no enforcement and there's no training with our NYPD  
17 with respect to the animal cruelty statute, and I'm  
18 just-- that's really needed. A lot of times, these  
19 offices don't even know that it's their  
20 responsibility. They still think it's ASPCA, which  
21 was 10 years ago now. It's not their fault. They're  
22 not properly trained. And just real quick, the DOH  
23 does nothing about the horses. They do nothing about  
24 turtles being illegally sold in the streets. They do  
25 nothing about the health crisis coming from live

1  
2 animal markets. The DOH should not be responsible  
3 for this city's animals, because they are failing.  
4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
6 much. Next panelist.

7 LESLIE RAMOS: Good afternoon. First of  
8 all, thank you so much for staying with us the entire  
9 day. It means a lot for me to know that our elected  
10 officials are with us in this battle, and I wish more  
11 of your colleagues were here to hear the stories that  
12 everyone has been sharing today. My name is Leslie  
13 Ramos.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I do want to point  
15 out that, because it's live-streamed, a lot of them  
16 are watching, and they're [inaudible]

17 LESLIE RAMOS: Okay, I mean, that is  
18 good, and know some of them that have helped.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Just know that.

20 LESLIE RAMOS: I mean, I know a few of  
21 them are animal lovers, but I also wish they would be  
22 here to meet us. So my name is Leslie Ramos. I'm a  
23 pro-animal lover, advocate. I have owned dogs all my  
24 life, but about 10 years ago I went from being scared  
25 of cats to now owning two special needs cats and

1  
2 having fostered over hundreds of cats. I preferred  
3 for those hissy [sic] kittens. I'm a Brooklyn  
4 resident but I work in Queens, New York with  
5 immigrant community in Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, and  
6 corona. It is often that I come across people within  
7 the community, a lot of them elderly, that are either  
8 owning pets or have rescue pets, but they don't have  
9 any access to affordable vet care, food, or  
10 transportation to take the animals to low-cost  
11 clinics. You know, there's a myth that among the  
12 Latino community we don't want to spay or neuter our  
13 animals. That's not true. It's that their resources  
14 are not there. Many times we come from countries  
15 where there's no vet around so it just become  
16 customary, but people are willing to spay the animal.  
17 They're looking for vaccination, and there's no--  
18 there's no access to it. I'm sorry, I lost my  
19 glasses, so I'm kind of skipping around here. So, I  
20 kind of want-- so I just want to basically advocate  
21 for three things, affordable spay and neuter. One,  
22 we need food shelter-- I mean, food spaces for people  
23 who are poor where they can go and get food for their  
24 pets. And we also need more education in non-English  
25 languages. It is-- I speak Spanish. I volunteer for



1  
2 the Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition, but it  
3 is often that I have to step from my job to  
4 translate. But it could help if people understand  
5 like me-- I was lucky to have a support group to  
6 understand cats, but I know a lot of people who want  
7 to take care of animals, they just don't know how to.  
8 So, thank you so much.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you so much  
10 and I want to thank this panel. Thank you. Okay,  
11 the last in-person panel, and then we're going to do  
12 online, is Bill Sacrey, Roxanne-- I can't make out  
13 the last-- no, it's-- is it enough to say Roxanne,  
14 because I can't read the last name. I can't make it  
15 out. I'm sorry? Okay, thank you. She left? Oh,  
16 it's you, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I got it. I got it.  
17 Sorry about that. [inaudible] Maggie Schnayerson  
18 [sp?], Judith Lustgarten Goldstein, and Marilyn  
19 Galfin [sp?].

20 MAGGIE SCHNAYERSON: good evening. My  
21 name is Maggie Schnayerson and I volunteer as an  
22 independent rescuer under the name Bay Ridge Kittens.  
23 I have been rescuing, vetting, and finding adopters  
24 for homeless animals in Brooklyn since coming across  
25 a friendly injured cat dodging traffic on my way home

1 from a late shift as an EMT in 2019. In my District  
2 47 neighborhood, I assist shop owners and those with  
3 limited income or mobility by bringing their pets to  
4 a handful of low-cost spay/neuter clinics throughout  
5 the city for basic vet care. I do not own a  
6 veterinary. I use ride share services and cover those  
7 costs myself, along with vet bills, equipment, food,  
8 medication, and so much more like many of the  
9 rescuers you've heard from here. I ask friends,  
10 neighbors and those on social media to contribute  
11 when they can, but last year alone, the cost of my  
12 little community service effort was nearly \$37,000. I  
13 also assist my many neighbors who discover cats and  
14 kittens living under their porches and windows.  
15 Invariably, they are stunned to realize no city  
16 support exists to help them navigate that  
17 predicament. On more than one occasion my state  
18 Senator and City Council persons have found  
19 themselves in that scenario at their homes and their  
20 district offices. The only solution available, even  
21 to them, was to request help from me, an individual  
22 volunteer donating her time while balancing a job and  
23 family obligations. This is a solvable problem should  
24 you choose to allocate funds to upstream solutions  
25

1  
2 that we know work. We need high-volume, high-quality  
3 low or no-cost spay/neuter services and affordable  
4 vet care for any rescuer or pet owner who needs it.  
5 as a native New Yorker who knows full well what my  
6 beloved city is capable of when we set our minds to  
7 something, I know this is something that we can get  
8 done. Thank you to the community for this  
9 opportunity and to my fellow rescuers for their  
10 unheralded dedication.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
12 much. Roxanne, yeah.

13 ROXANNE DELGADO: Hello. My name's  
14 Roxanne Delgado. I'm the Founder of Bronx Animal  
15 Rights Electors which is not active normally, but we  
16 were very instrumental in fighting for the Bronx  
17 Animal Shelter in Bartow or Bay Plaza while also  
18 stopping the Parks proposed ban on feeding squirrels  
19 and birds, and now I'm an active founder of a group  
20 run for over seven years of [inaudible] Parkway,  
21 Environmental Social Justice Group that rescue  
22 wildlife in the parks, as well as Teach Our Children  
23 to Respect Nature and Care for the Trees. I'm here  
24 because I live in District 13 and our district has  
25 such a large political spectrum, but what unites our

1  
2 community is our love for animals. So despite our  
3 districts, we tend to unite in District 13. There's  
4 a lot of animal lovers, a lot of animal rescuers.  
5 I'm here to speak for people like my neighbor who  
6 lost her house because she spent all her time feeding  
7 animals and rescuing them, another neighbor who lost  
8 her husband because he left her because she spent  
9 more time rescuing animals, and another neighbor, a  
10 couple who don't speak English-- they're out there  
11 feeding cats and asking for help because homeowners  
12 are harassing them, and they don't speak English.  
13 These are people who are not animal rescuers, but  
14 these are people who are in need. So, I'm saying  
15 this because this city can help these people by first  
16 a resolution to remove sales tax on pet food, because  
17 if I told you how much money I spent on pet food, you  
18 would not believe it because I myself cannot believe  
19 it when I see the numbers. This pet food is not a  
20 luxury item. It's a necessity. Secondly, I asked you  
21 to mandate spay and neutering in leases because  
22 unfortunately, people are not good pet parents or  
23 owners. And lastly, I'm here on behalf-- I spent my  
24 day off here for many hours with no food and not even  
25 a jacket. I'm here for Bronx resident Happy, the

1 confined lonely elephant. The Bronx has been  
2 notorious of being very scandalous headlines, but  
3 with the top of the list what the Bronx Zoo is doing  
4 to Happy, the confined elephant, this is not  
5 conservation. This is animal cruelty. I ask you not  
6 to give one penny of public money to the Bronx Zoo  
7 until they do the right thing. Because she has--  
8 she's 50 years old, alright. Over 50, she has very  
9 few years left in her lifespan. Let her have her  
10 many days in a sanctuary and have actually a day of  
11 freedom. I'm asking you, because I'm very upset  
12 what's happening with the Bronx Zoo and that's  
13 happening to Happy. I do not want one penny of my  
14 money that I work very hard for to go to that Bronx  
15 Zoo. Nor do I want-- I want this legislation to set  
16 happy free, because what they're doing to Happy and  
17 bringing shame to the Bronx is very upsetting. Thank  
18 you so much.

19  
20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
21 much. Stop, stop. Go ahead, next.

22 UNIDENTIFIED: We have formal city  
23 committees chaired by Council Members for everything,  
24 though nothing for animals other than what I feel is  
25 a non-operative animal welfare agency consisting of

1  
2 one person, not a Council Member, who doesn't reply  
3 to public inquiries. The animal arena isn't just a  
4 business, it's in fact an enormous business, yet the  
5 field isn't being dealt with responsibly and it's  
6 treated as an appendage. Oh, they're just animals.  
7 It's time proper effective business protocol be put  
8 into place along with a Civilian Review Board with  
9 the proper independent people, so this field can  
10 finally be done in the right way successfully and  
11 responsibly to the animals. There's a way, and then  
12 there's the right way. All people of wisdom know, as  
13 with any cause, it's always the advocates who live  
14 and breathe the cause every day who really know  
15 what's going on. People in general love animals. If  
16 the public knew what the advocates know, the roar  
17 would become utterly deafening. If you're brave  
18 enough to follow the to-be-destroyed list of ACC,  
19 that I warn you, it'll sear your soul. Because  
20 you're watching animals, you're reading everything,  
21 and all the sudden they're killed, and it starts  
22 affecting you. ACC basic business protocol 101, none  
23 in place. Dire protocols for nearly every business  
24 are customer service, follow-through, consistency,  
25 and for ACC, marketing. There's not one line item

1  
2 allotted for marketing, nothing. Their only  
3 marketing is done if it's for free. The majority of  
4 New Yorkers don't even know they exist. So, no  
5 marketing equals no public awareness, equals little  
6 to no adoptions. Look at ASPCA marketing. Everyone  
7 knows them as they sit with a half a million dollars  
8 in their reserve fund growing annually. Yet, ACC  
9 does none. And two, as with any successful business,  
10 you put the proper brilliant ethical professionals--  
11 in this case, business, admin, marketing, and animal  
12 professionals at ACC in the proper positions with the  
13 proper plans implemented and the proper motivational  
14 mindset behind it, honorable to the entities of this  
15 business which in this case are these helpless,  
16 homeless animals. In January--

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Can  
18 you sum up?

19 UNIDENTIFIED: Oh, boy. I don't know.  
20 I've got a lot.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: You've got to--  
22 well, you can submit it.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: I will. I will. In  
24 truth, I wish I never tripped into this arena,  
25 because it's changed me, because I follow the kill

1  
2 list. It's changed me not in a good way. I walk  
3 around most of the time with such sadness in my  
4 heart, in my mind, on the ground, while oddly enough  
5 it's overseen and protected by the wall of steel of  
6 the Department of Human Health and Mental Hygiene.  
7 It's quite the dichotomy, and rather ironic because  
8 DOH is creating human mental depression and anxiety  
9 for all those who know what's happening behind those  
10 closed doors. Manhattan ACC is crawling with bugs.  
11 I have videos. The cages and kennels already in  
12 Queens are filthy. None of this makes sense. And  
13 the new Queens shelter, no access to public  
14 transportation, where is the logic? I'm big on  
15 business logic, and it's just not happening. And  
16 oddly enough, with no fair bidding process, they were  
17 simply granted a 34-year \$1.4 billion contract after  
18 receiving scathing city audits, having filthy  
19 diseased shelters crawling with bugs, mega drugging--  
20 now these drugs are very dangerous, and these drugs,  
21 you need to be weaned off of--

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Can  
23 I-- listen, I really-- we have 15 people waiting to  
24 testify online, so please wrap it up.

25 UNIDENTIFIED: Alright.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Like I said, you  
3 can submit it in writing.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: I will, but I do want to  
5 say this. What they do is irresponsible and it's  
6 dangerous. The animals need to be weaned off the  
7 drugs, but they don't give the medication to the  
8 adopters, fosters, rescues so it can be done  
9 responsibly. It goes against the manufacturer's  
10 recommendation. It's incredibly dangerous and  
11 irresponsible. They miss contract deadlines. I can  
12 go on and on, and I'll put it all in a--

13 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
14 You'll submit that.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: You want to make a  
17 last sentence? You want to give a last sentence to  
18 wrap it up?

19 UNIDENTIFIED: 20-- January 2024 board  
20 meeting, it was the first time they ever ended the  
21 video after the ACC presentation, purposely cutting  
22 out the entire portion of the members of the public  
23 speaking, because they didn't want the outside public  
24 and the politicians to hear what was said, because it  
25 got heated, and it's just more control of how-- more

1  
2 proof of how they are controlling and their continued  
3 lack of transparency.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, thank you.  
5 Thank you very much and please make sure that you  
6 submit your entire--

7 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] I will.  
8 Thank you. I'll call your office also. I'll call  
9 you, too, Joann. I won't. I'm very thorough--

10 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Okay,  
11 next panelist.

12 UNIDENTIFIED: and detail oriented. The  
13 last person.

14 MARILYN GALFIN: Marilyn Galfin, Voices  
15 for Shelter Animals. As you've heard, this crisis is  
16 out of control. It's created a mental health crisis.  
17 We need help. This council-- we don't have anything  
18 as been said. These animals in the city have no  
19 standing. We have even asked-- I've been fighting  
20 for an Animal Welfare Committee on the City Council.  
21 We can't even get that. We need a Department of  
22 Animal Welfare. What's going on, there's so much  
23 cruelty in this city. Right now, we need a new-- we  
24 need a crackdown on animal abandonment which is in  
25 the law-- against the law, but we need a special

1 force, a special unit. This shouldn't be with the  
2 police. We have to send a message because this is  
3 really out of control. We need to have a moratorium  
4 as been said before. We need a moratorium on  
5 backyard breeding right now. We need to have no  
6 nonsense laws, and we've never had anything. Shelter  
7 reforms for these animals as much as we fought for  
8 it. everything else has been covered, the  
9 spay/neuter, microchipping, all the things that's  
10 needed to help the rescues, but how can we have  
11 healthy dogs come in to the Manhattan deplorable  
12 shelter, then they get deathly ill, and then the  
13 rescue is put on burdens-- or the rescue is on  
14 burden. Hey, you take on the financial cost. You  
15 save them. How can this be? We need emergency  
16 overflow spaces right now. We need places. When  
17 you're-- if you're a homeless person, you've lost  
18 everything. I've seen people on the internet, "Help,  
19 I've lost everything." Where are they to go? The  
20 City cannot tell me that we can't get more beds for  
21 people in a crisis situation [inaudible] go with  
22 pets. Victims of domestic violence-- if you get  
23 arrested and you have no family member, where is the  
24 dog going? To the kill shelter. We need the police.  
25

1  
2 They shouldn't be taking dogs tied to poles into the  
3 kill shelter. We need to have another funnel where  
4 these dogs go. There's so much that needs to be  
5 done, and not the opportunity to speak with this  
6 which is the problem. I'd like to know after this,  
7 can we continue this because this is so much. We  
8 need an entity to address what's been given here  
9 today, because something needs to happen, but no one  
10 has the time and no one has the energy. Many Council  
11 Members not even interested in this concept. But  
12 right now, to continue, because this is important--  
13 we have animals sitting in the shelter right now who  
14 are not getting walked. Then when they start to  
15 deteriorate, they're put in kill lists. They're  
16 giving them these bios to make them look unadoptable,  
17 to make them look dangerous, and then when people get  
18 them, they're nothing like the bio. It's being used  
19 against them. I have people calling me, what is  
20 this? It's got to stop.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Can you please sum  
22 up?

23 UNIDENTIFIED: Well, I'm summing up that  
24 we need an opportunity so we don't have to sum up.  
25 We need an ongoing dialogue. We need to coordinate

1  
2 this information. We need a database. Some people  
3 don't even know what to do when they lose an animal.  
4 There is so much--

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
6 Understood.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: needs to be done. The  
8 question is, will we be given an opportunity to  
9 address this again. This is not a one oversight  
10 hearing and that--722

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] We  
12 appre-- I appreciate that and I appreciate your  
13 testimony.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: But my question is will  
15 this be continued and will this be an organized thing  
16 to continue, because this is a big thing. It's not a  
17 one-shot deal.

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yes. This hearing  
19 is going to be-- we're going to get all the  
20 information and we're going to figure out what we're  
21 going to do afterwards, so--

22 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] But how do we  
23 get involved in the process, because you know, we'd  
24 like to be part of the process, not left out of the  
25 process.

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CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yeah, we--

UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] I've given--

I have--

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]

Understood.

UNIDENTIFIED: I have model legislation  
in housing, but I couldn't get anyone to enforce it.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Well, we're--

UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] I mean, to  
work on it.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: We're going to  
circle back after we go through all the testimony.  
We have to wait until testimony is submitted. People  
have up to 72 hours to do that, and then--

UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] [inaudible]

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: we're going to  
circle back with folks, so. Thank you. Thank you  
very much.

UNIDENTIFIED: And I hope we're given an  
opportunity that we have forums and everything.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED: And people need to know  
what might even be available--

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] sure.

1 UNIDENTIFIED: When COVID was out--

2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Okay,  
3 thank you guys. Thank you very much. We have online  
4 panel?  
5

6 UNIDENTIFIED: What's the email for the  
7 testimony to submit?

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: It's  
9 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you very much. No,  
10 but thank you. Okay, so we're ready to do the online  
11 panels. Okay, we're going to call it in groups of  
12 three, and I'm going to ask you not to start until  
13 the Sergeant gives you the cue. So, the first person  
14 is Anne Margaret Daniel, and then it'll be Caitlin  
15 Kelly, and then Teresa Noto.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

17 ANNE MARGARET DANIEL: Thank you. My  
18 name is Anne Margaret Daniel, and the first thing I'd  
19 like to do is add my voice to the chorus of people  
20 who are thanking you for today. Thank you all for  
21 this hearing. To Madam Chair Schulman, Counselors  
22 Ariola and Holden, to the vets who donate their care,  
23 to NYC ACC, New Hope, partner rescues special thanks.  
24 There's been much praise of the new NYC ACC buildings  
25 today, and anticipation of others to be opened, or in

1 the case of Brooklyn to be reopened in the future.  
2 Large modern buildings with light throughout and  
3 medical rooms are wonderful, but not when they have  
4 dirty kennels and untended dogs. The recent issues  
5 that were reported by the NY Post and other news  
6 organizations at the new Queens facility are grave,  
7 and I'd like to ask that they really must be  
8 monitored for the safety of the animals as well as  
9 the people working there. Upgrades and renovations  
10 have provided nice public space and office space, but  
11 the new Staten Island building actually has fewer  
12 kennels for dogs than did the crumbling old building,  
13 and things like that just shouldn't be. I do want to  
14 commend the ACC foster program, and I'm very proud to  
15 be a member of it. Please foster an ACC dog or cat  
16 if you can and go volunteer at the nearest shelter  
17 building. It literally makes all the difference. I  
18 also am very proud to be an ACC adopter. However,  
19 I'd like to tell you just briefly about my adoption  
20 experience. We saw a puppy named Beauty, a pit  
21 bull/lab mix on the at-risk list back in July of  
22 2019. We saw her solely because she was shared by  
23 animal advocates on a website then known as Twitter--  
24



1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you  
3 for your testimony. Your time is expired.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Just--if you could  
5 just summarize and--

6 ANNE MARGARET DANIEL: [interposing] I'm  
7 happy to summarize. Thank you for the chance to do  
8 so. This puppy was to be killed not for any health  
9 or behavioral reasons, just being fearful. She was  
10 fearful because she was in heat. There was no sort of  
11 proper attention given to her physical condition, and  
12 there was absolutely no follow-up whatsoever on our  
13 adoption. As to the overcrowding issue, thank  
14 heavens for adoptions, but in conclusion, there must  
15 be oversight of these adoptions. No one followed up  
16 at all on our adoption. Our references were not  
17 called, not even our vets. There was no site visit,  
18 no request even for a video tour or photographs of  
19 our home, and Beauty was delivered to us in heat and  
20 unspayed. It was only because I'm honest that I had  
21 her spayed myself and provided a certificate of that  
22 to the ACC about a month and a half later. I never  
23 heard anything at all from that follow up. So, thank  
24 you for listening to what I had to say,--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]

3 Sure.

4 ANN MARGARET DANIEL: and caring about  
5 New York City dogs and other animals in need. Thank  
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: sure absolutely.  
8 I'm going to ask Caitlin Kelly, and I just-- please,  
9 we have a lot of people online that are testifying,  
10 and it's getting late in the evening. So I'm going  
11 to ask people to please, please, please limit your  
12 comments to two minutes. You can always submit  
13 written testimony. Thank you. Caitlin?

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 CAITLIN KELLY: Thank you. Sorry, re-  
16 muted myself there. Hi, my name is Caitlin Kelly and  
17 I am testifying on behalf of the Animal Legal Defense  
18 Fund. We are the nation's preeminent legal advocacy  
19 organization for animals, and we are respectfully  
20 requesting the New York City Council to make a  
21 serious investment in the state of animal rescue in  
22 New York City. Companion animal issues stem from  
23 human-made problems. A lack of funding for resources  
24 such as education regarding the importance of and the  
25 accessibility to spay and neuter, affordable

1  
2 veterinary care, and pet-friendly affordable housing  
3 all contribute to overpopulation in an over-burdened  
4 sheltering system. These are not issues that any  
5 single animal welfare entity can solve alone.  
6 Ninety-seven percent of U.S. pet owners consider  
7 their pets to be a part of their family. Over half  
8 of U.S. pet owners not only consider their pets to be  
9 a part of their family, but they say their pets are  
10 as much of a part of the family as a human member.  
11 Yet, overburdened animals shelters are witnessing  
12 families surrender pets, some who have been a part of  
13 a family for years because of a lack of pet-friendly  
14 affordable housing in the city. No family should  
15 have to abandon one of their members in order to find  
16 a home. Renters and lower income families with pets  
17 have even fewer options. In 2021, the State of New  
18 York passed legislation that prohibits insurance  
19 carriers from discriminating against homeowners based  
20 on their dog's breed. However, notably, it's still  
21 lawful to allow the same discrimination against  
22 renters to continue. New York City is largely a city  
23 of renters with over two-thirds of households renting  
24 their homes, and roughly half of those households  
25 living in rent regulated apartments. This means that

1  
2 over two-thirds of households in the city may still  
3 be subject to insurance discrimination including  
4 higher costs or refusal to cover based solely on  
5 their dog's breed. A family should not be forced to  
6 separate because of limited affordable housing or  
7 insurance options. Keeping families together allows  
8 shelters and rescuers to put their time and resources  
9 toward--

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you  
11 for your testimony. Your time is expired.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Just sum-- just  
13 summar-- if you could just summarize the rest of your  
14 testimony, that'll be fine.

15 CAITLIN KELLY: Yeah, sure. We want you  
16 guys to keep-- work on keeping families together with  
17 their pets that shelters and rescuers can focus on  
18 the animals in need. Thank you for your time and  
19 consideration.

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
21 much. Okay. Teresa Noto?

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

23 TERESA NOTO: Hello. Hi. Thank you, Ms.  
24 Schulman and Council Members for making today  
25 possible, and thank you to my Council Member Oswald

1  
2 Feliz for being here. My name is Teresa Noto and I'm  
3 a Co-founder of Bronx Tails Cat Rescue, and like many  
4 others here I'm an overwhelmed and exhausted rescuer.  
5 Here are just a few circumstances that I'm currently  
6 working on. A rescued cat with an injured leg, I was  
7 told that she was tossed out of a window. A 70-year-  
8 old woman who cannot care for 25+ unaltered cats.  
9 There's no room at the ACC and we don't have any good  
10 options for her. An abandoned adult male cat who was  
11 severely emaciated when we found him, and he weighs  
12 now about five and a half pounds. He should weight  
13 10. And I could continue. I live and work in the  
14 Bronx as a Speech Pathologist. My heart is for Bronx  
15 residents, Bronx children, and Bronx animals. My  
16 neighbors cannot afford spay/neuter services, so  
17 their pets reproduce over and over. They give away  
18 kittens and puppies because it's too costly to care  
19 for them. Those pets reproduce and many are  
20 discarded like trash, and the cycle of abandonment  
21 and cruelty continues. I volunteer my time and  
22 resources. It's not enough. So low-cost spay/neuter  
23 programs for our community will result in fewer  
24 homeless pets, healthier shelter animals, direct  
25 support for our residents, and improve relations with

1  
2 our community leaders. So, please, help our  
3 communities provide low-cost, high-volume spay/neuter  
4 in the Bronx and New York City. The greatest city in  
5 the world should have the greatest heart for its  
6 people and animals. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
8 much. We have something listed here as Harlem Animal  
9 Rescue, but we need the name of the individual in  
10 order for you to testify. Kristi Nelson?

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Elsie Hellenbeck  
13 [sp?].

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Steven Gruber?

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

17 STEVEN GRUBER: I'm Steve Gruber. I'm the  
18 Director of Communications for the Mayor's Alliance  
19 for New York City's Animals. The Alliance is a  
20 nonprofit charity that serves as a source of  
21 information for pet owners and others seeking  
22 services and resources to care for their pets and  
23 anyone looking to help improve the lives of New York  
24 City's animals. Now, I'm going-- my testimony's been  
25 filed already, so I'm just going to kind of cut to

1 the chase. So many people have said so many important  
2 things today. We know what the problem is. And I  
3 want to just refer back in history a little bit. In  
4 2003, New York City faced a crisis where three out of  
5 every four animals coming into New York City shelters  
6 were euthanized, and rather than throwing up our  
7 hands and saying that's awful, in response the rescue  
8 community came together in collaboration spearheaded  
9 by the then newly-created Mayor's Alliance for New  
10 York City's Animals, and eventually 150 rescue groups  
11 and shelters including ACC, and then the ASPCA banded  
12 together under the alliance banner and created new  
13 strategies to increase adoptions, expand spay/neuter  
14 options, and drive down euthanasia rates. And this  
15 unprecedented effort paid off handsomely after-- over  
16 the years where we were able to increase the live  
17 release rate at ACC to more than 90 percent. Now,  
18 today's challenges today threaten to derail those  
19 hard-won successes in life-saving, and to continue to  
20 rely solely on the ASPCA, ACC and other dedicated  
21 animal welfare organizations and independent rescuers  
22 to shoulder that burden isn't sustainable. They  
23 alone cannot satisfy the needs of our community. And  
24 so today we're asking the City beginning with the  
25

1  
2 City Council to step up and provide funding to  
3 supplement the efforts--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you  
5 for your testimony. Your time is expired.

6 STEVEN GRUBER: of the private sector--

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]

8 That's okay, just finish up.

9 STEVEN GRUBER: to create and expand  
10 existing efforts of-- to create and expand existing  
11 high-volume spay/neuter resources and low-cost  
12 community veterinary facilities to meet the needs of  
13 the public and the rescue community. We implore our  
14 city's leaders to commit to sharing the cost of  
15 providing those much-needed services if we are to  
16 solve this very solvable problem. And on a separate  
17 note, I'd like to express our support for Council  
18 Member Brannan's Intro 1018. Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
20 much. Lynda Naclerio?

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

22 LYNDNA NACLERIO: thank you for giving me  
23 the opportunity to speak. I submitted my testimony  
24 already, mostly about the cats that I have rescued  
25 off my porch after they found me. I live in the



1 Pelham Gardens area of the Bronx, New York. In 2019  
2 I rescued a calico tabby that just befriended me, and  
3 within three weeks of moving in, she gave birth to a  
4 kitten. We fell in love with him. I said I don't  
5 care how many kittens she has, I'm keeping them.  
6 Because when I was a kid and we adopted from  
7 shelters, they were already spayed and neutered or  
8 they gave us a voucher or free spay and neutering.  
9 When I went to have this one kitten, and my little  
10 girlfriend spayed and neutered, they told me that it  
11 would \$495 to neuter him and \$675 to spay her, and I  
12 was shocked, but I had nowhere else to go because I'm  
13 limited by location, and so I maxed out my Care  
14 credit card, and in turn couldn't help other cats  
15 that were out on the street that I knew-- you know, I  
16 was feeding them and I was saying, well, that's what  
17 it costs to spay and neuter them, what am I going to  
18 do? And during the pandemic a tuxedo cat brought her  
19 kittens to me, and I cried a lot, and I said no, I  
20 have to bring them in. I have to do something,  
21 because she just again picked me, and she is very  
22 friendly. I had to-- I just made a lot of calls and  
23 I found out that the Humane Society of Westchester  
24 worked with a vet in Ardsley. So it was a drive. I  
25

1  
2 had to recruit help from the internet to drive us  
3 there, and--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you  
5 for your testimony.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I just need you--  
7 I just need you to sum up.

8 LYNDA NACLERIO: We do need-- we do need  
9 low-cost-- we need low-cost spay and neuter, because  
10 a third kitten showed up and I was in between jobs,  
11 didn't have anything for it, and thankfully I could  
12 keep her because someone organized a free spay for  
13 her on one of the vans. So thank you, and thank you--  
14 -

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Thank  
16 you. Thank you very much. Evril Caesar-Mason.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

18 EVRIL CAESAR-MASON: Okay, good  
19 afternoon. Thank you very much for giving me the  
20 opportunity to speak today. I just want to talk a  
21 bit about my experience as I listened earlier to the  
22 panel from ACC. I never knew that that was the amount  
23 of money that they had, you know, to help with  
24 animals. In December of 2022 I bought-- I bought 100  
25 toys and I took it to the ACC Shelter on Linden [sic]

1 for the dogs. I'm a dog-- you know, I'm a dog lover.  
2 Never had a cat before. I took it there and then I am  
3 quiet because there was some cats that I was feeding  
4 in my yard. So I had a conversation-- I told them  
5 about the cats. I said I feed them, you know, and it  
6 was really cold, and I asked-- I said if I get the  
7 cats trapped, can I bring them in, you know, to get  
8 them fixed and stuff like that. They told me yes. I  
9 got in touch with-- someone refer me to Sassy [sic]  
10 Cats, and she came out right away and she trapped  
11 them, and I took them there. I took them to ACC. I  
12 called first, and they were so-- the lady Sarah, she  
13 was so nasty with me on the phone. She was like, you  
14 can't bring them here. We're not going to take them.  
15 I said, well, what am I going to do with them. And  
16 she just like-- oh, just let them go. I said but you  
17 guys are trying to, you know, control the population.  
18 So at least get them fixed. But I was able to get in  
19 touch with someone, and I paid the money out of my  
20 pocket to get them fixed, and I picked them up. I  
21 said you know what, I'm going to bring them in the  
22 house, because it was so cold outside. I took them  
23 in. And there are a lot of the organization, I find  
24 that when you call they're not responding. They're  
25

1  
2 not doing anything. I picked up a kitten that I  
3 witness a dog picked up and shook the kitten so bad,  
4 broke the kitten's back. I didn't know what to do. I  
5 call so many different places. I had to take the  
6 kitten to the vet myself and did eventually--

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you  
8 for your testimony. Your time is expired.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: We need you to sum  
10 up.

11 EVRIL CAESAR-MASON: Yeah, so what we  
12 really need help out here. I see the cats in my  
13 area. Sassy [sic] is great when I call her.  
14 whenever she can, she come, but we really need help  
15 with the organization to come out, you know, and lend  
16 a hand and we need more, you know, dependable and  
17 affordable spay and neutering clinics and vets. We  
18 really need help with the vets, because one of the  
19 cats that I took to the vet--

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
21 Right.

22 EVRIL CAESAR-MASON: The vet was \$1,046  
23 and I had to pay that out my pocket.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay.  
25

1  
2                   EVRIL CAESAR-MASON: You know, so we  
3 really need the help out here.

4                   CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
5 much. Sarai Garcia?

6                   SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

7                   SARAI GARCIA: Ladies and gentlemen of  
8 the City Council, thank you very much for letting me  
9 speak today. My name is Sarai Garcia. I'm a former  
10 Veterinary Assistant and founder and Fins and Fur  
11 Aquatic Animal Micro-Sanctuary in Sunset Park,  
12 Brooklyn. I would like to discuss an important  
13 amendment to a current bill concerning the use of  
14 animals as prizes in local events. The existing  
15 legislation is found under Section 358, Chapter 69.  
16 While this current legislation prohibits giving away  
17 animals as prizes, it happens to exclude fish. I  
18 urge you to consider adding the fish to the list of  
19 animals banned as prizes, specifically goldfish, Beta  
20 fish and turtles who have no legal protections. The  
21 practice of giving fish as prizes raises several  
22 ethical and environmental concerns. Firstly, the  
23 decision to have a companion animal is a very serious  
24 responsibility which requires planning and commitment  
25 to their long-term care. It should not be based on

1  
2 throwing a ping-pong ball into a bowl. When fish are  
3 handed out as prizes, this not only affects the  
4 welfare of the fish, but also sends a message that  
5 life can be treated carelessly. Moreover, releasing  
6 these fish into local waterways whether intentionally  
7 or accidentally poses a risk to our native  
8 ecosystems. By amending the bill to include fish, we  
9 align our community with responsible and humane  
10 practices, ensuring that we treat all animals with  
11 dignity and respect they deserve. I urge the City  
12 Council to take this necessary step for welfare and  
13 our environment and community. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So, Ms. Garcia,  
15 just so you know that's State legislation, not city  
16 legislation, but we'll see what we can do to be-- to  
17 advocate with the State. Okay?

18 SARAI GARCIA: Okay, thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Janie  
20 Hernandez, Jeanny Hernandez?

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

22 JEANNY HERNANDEZ: Hello? Can you hear  
23 me?

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yes.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: We hear you.

1  
2                   JEANNY HERNANDEZ: Sorry for the  
3 background noise. I've been waiting all day to  
4 testify. Okay. My name is Jeanny Hernandez. I'm a  
5 Coney Island resident. I'm grateful, you know, for  
6 the opportunity to testify today as a concerned pet  
7 parent. I am testifying today in honor of my dogs  
8 Margo and Poppy [sic]. I have always found immense  
9 comfort in support from my pets throughout my life.  
10 They have been my lifeline during tough times,  
11 especially when I was bed-ridden during the COVID  
12 pandemic. My dogs never left my side. Witnesses the  
13 struggles that pet parents like myself face due to  
14 the exorbitant cost of veterinary care truly pains  
15 me. According to the American Health Association,  
16 studies show that dogs reduce stress, anxiety, and  
17 depression, ease loneliness, encourage exercise, and  
18 improve overall health. Last year, I tragically lost  
19 my dog Margo due to the high cost of vet care. It's  
20 really hard. I vividly remember being humiliated at  
21 the vet emergency room in one location. They  
22 callously told me you cannot afford an x-ray. As  
23 tears streamed down my face while holding Margo in  
24 front of my family. The day we had to put him to  
25 sleep, I felt like I had failed him. Even today I

1  
2 struggle to find peace. Perhaps I should have worked  
3 tirelessly, or maybe I should have sold some of my  
4 possessions or begged my friend for money to cover  
5 for the high cost. Pet parents shouldn't be forced  
6 to endure these hardships. During another emergency  
7 vet visit with my other dog Poppy I was told, "When  
8 do you think you can submit a payment? Your dog is  
9 suffering a lot." Implying that a payment was needed  
10 to treat my dog. Meanwhile, I was struggling to find  
11 the funds. I found this treatment towards me and my  
12 dog to be completely inhumane. After going through  
13 all this, I'm afraid. I'm afraid to care for another  
14 dog due to the fact that I will not be able to afford  
15 the vet care due to very high cost. And I love  
16 animals--

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you  
18 for your testimony. Your time's expired.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Can you-- can you  
20 summarize, because the time is up, but we'll give  
21 you--

22 JEANNY HERNANDEZ: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: We'll give you a  
24 minute to summarize. Go ahead.

25



1  
2           JEANNY HERNANDEZ: Okay. So this is why  
3 I implore the city government to allocate for  
4 financial funding for high-volume, low-cost spaying  
5 and neutering and accessible veterinary care for any  
6 New Yorker in need. Thank you so much.

7           CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Teresa  
8 Youngblood?

9           SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10          TERESA YOUNGBLOOD: [inaudible] everyone  
11 for the opportunity to testify. It's been a long  
12 exhausting day, and I don't want to-- I have a story  
13 too along the lines what others have testified. The  
14 thing I would say that I have particularly to offer  
15 is that I've just heard so many heroic hearts of my  
16 fellow New Yorkers, people in rescue, people that  
17 love their animals, and I feel like finding good  
18 funding to provide affordable care is just going to  
19 be multiplied many times over, because I don't know  
20 how you could find dollars that could go farther.  
21 There are a lot of beautiful organizations that are  
22 stand ready to do more if they just had the  
23 resources. And in my community in Inwood there are  
24 many abandoned cats, and I know many people would  
25 have their animals, but they cannot afford to care

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2 for them, and so they abandon them when they're  
3 injured or sick, and our volunteers here, including  
4 Osi Kaminer, so hard to try to do the impossible with  
5 very little. Last thing I'd say is I also-- I have a  
6 service dog, and I have been fortunate to have a  
7 grant to cover some of his-- and he hasn't had any  
8 major illness or injury, but I had a grant to cover  
9 some and I've been able to make up the rest. Already  
10 in his first two years of life I've had a couple of  
11 times where I've had to grapple with am I going to be  
12 able to keep him because it-- because I fear the  
13 bills and where will I turn, and is he in good hands  
14 with me, or should he be living somewhere else where  
15 vet care is not so expensive and where he-- I know  
16 he'd get the care he needed if he could. So, anyway,  
17 thank you so much. It's been a long, exhausting day.  
18 Thank you everyone for the chance to add my voice,  
19 and I appreciate you all.

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. We  
21 appreciate you testifying. Arina Hinzen?

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

23 ARINA HINZEN: Yes, hello, and thank you  
24 so much for hanging in there. My name's Arina Hinzen  
25 and I'm the founder of the Urban Wildlife Alliance,

1  
2 an all-volunteer nonprofit dedicated to the welfare  
3 of New York City's wildlife which is too often  
4 forgotten and overlooked when we think of animals in  
5 New York City. The hands-on rehabilitation of sick  
6 and injured and orphaned wildlife plays the main role  
7 in our mission, and we have been a proud New Hope  
8 partner with ACC since 2012, taking in hundreds of  
9 wild animals directly from city shelters. In  
10 wildlife rehabilitation almost all animals we take in  
11 are suffering from health issues or injuries. While  
12 we are trained to handle many of these issues  
13 ourselves, we still rely heavily on veterinary  
14 services for X-rays, procedures requiring anesthesia,  
15 prosection medication, and sadly euthanasia when  
16 necessary. Our work is a free service to the city  
17 and the public. We receive no financial support and  
18 we cover all expenses through personal funds and  
19 small donations. We have always been stretched to  
20 our limits because there are not enough of us, but at  
21 least until the pandemic our organization was  
22 fortunate to have the support of a compassionate  
23 animal hospital that shared our vision and values.  
24 Sadly, when the hospital was sold to a corporate  
25 chain, we lost all access to affordable veterinary

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2 care which had a profound and devastating impact on  
3 our work. Now, without affordable services, if we  
4 can find a vet at all who would see our patients, we  
5 face veterinary bills of \$500 to \$800 a visit, and  
6 this is not including surgery which many of our  
7 animals need. Those costs are too much for a small  
8 organization like us to shoulder. We are exhausted  
9 physically, emotionally, and financially. As a  
10 result, we have to significantly cut back on intake--

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you  
12 for your testimony. Your time is expired.

13 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Can you just  
14 summarize please for us. Okay.

15 ARINA HINZEN: We have to cut back on all  
16 intakes that require vet care. We need your help.  
17 We need access to affordable veterinary care to  
18 continue our work, and we hope that you won't forget  
19 about the needs of city wildlife. Thank you so much.

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very  
21 much. Harlem Animal Rescue?

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible]

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: You're on --  
25 hello?

1  
2 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible]  
3 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Kristi Nelson?  
4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.  
5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: You have to accept  
6 the request to be promoted as a panelist to speak.  
7 Is there anyone else on Zoom that wishes to speak?  
8 If so, use the raise hand function. Garcita Samuel  
9 [sp?], Sue Scoretti [sp?], Tiffany Lacy [sp?], Teresa  
10 Youngblood, Donny Moss [sp?], Gisella Donahue [sp?],  
11 Teresa Damico [sp?], Sara Sears [sp?], Claire Corey,  
12 John Mayer [sp?], Nija Howard [sp?], Julie Flanagan  
13 [sp?], Crystal Crowell [sp?], Julie Netto [sp?],  
14 Ashley Carter [sp?], Delaina Dillon [sp?], Julie  
15 Flanagan [sp?], Elizabeth Forell [sp?], Linia Gibbs  
16 [sp?], Judith Ares [sp?], Andrea Brio [sp?], Minell  
17 Joham [sp?], Anne Levin [sp?], Patricia Flint, Eileen  
18 Richman [sp?], Dana Jacobs, Shay Smith, Renee Ortiz,  
19 Jenny Montoya [sp?], Elizabeth Levy, Joan Novick  
20 [sp?], Rena LaFell [sp?], Lucy Jatton [sp?], Lauren  
21 Molina, Jennifer Vandercliff [sp?], Mandalyn McGovey  
22 Wallace [sp?], Emily-- Eric Goldstein, Courtney  
23 Chandel, Anthony Sintoro [sp?], Anne Watkins [sp?],  
24 Margaret McIntyre [sp?], Feargal Halligan, Laura  
25 Celtanna [sp?], Dee Bahara [sp?], Annabel Nist [sp?],

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2 Leslie Granger-- at this time, last call for anybody  
3 that's online that may want to testify. Please use  
4 the raise hand function. Okay, so I want to-- I'm  
5 going to close out the hearing, animal rescue hearing  
6 for September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024. I want to thank everyone  
7 who participated today. I want to thank the ASPCA for  
8 having a truck outside with animals to adopt, and I  
9 want to particularly thank my esteemed colleague and  
10 friend Joann Ariola for sticking in there with me for  
11 the whole hearing and she-- there were a number of--  
12 and I also want to thank Bob Holden who was here for  
13 a large part of the hearing, Council Member Holden.  
14 And I just want to say, one of the things that was  
15 mentioned earlier today is that this is a bipartisan  
16 effort. Council Member Ariola is a Republican. I'm  
17 a Democrat as the Chair, and we're all working  
18 together. We all want to make sure that we have the  
19 best care for animals. The major-- the major issue  
20 that was brought up was the spaying and neutering  
21 which was one of the goals that I had for today,  
22 because City Hall, not just the people that are here,  
23 but City Hall also is watching this. People at City-  
24 - in the Administration, and so the fact that we had  
25 over 150 people here, and we had another 20, 30

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2 online is very significant. It shows that the  
3 numbers are there to make this move and we're looking  
4 forward to looking at all the testimony that we get  
5 and sifting through the testimony that we receive  
6 today in-person and online and figuring out some  
7 remedies for some of these issues, but we really want  
8 to see low-cost or no-cost spaying and neutering  
9 which is done in other localities, and we need to  
10 have that here in New York, and we want to have low  
11 vet care, and we want to see some-- see if we can  
12 come up with some other actions that we can take--  
13 that we can do, and also we'll take a look at the  
14 budget implications and the budget opportunities as  
15 well. With that, I will close out the hearing. Thank  
16 you.

17 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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 September 30, 2024