

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND
WORKER PROTECTION

----- X

March 19, 2025

Start: 1:11 p.m.

Recess: 4:23 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room, 16th
Floor

B E F O R E: Julie Menin,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Gale A. Brewer
Tiffany Cabàn
Amanda Farias
Shekar Krishnan
Chi A. Ossè
Julie Won

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

Vilda Vera Mayuga
Commissioner

Kenny Minaya
First Deputy Commissioner

Michael Tiger
General Counsel

Carlos Ortiz
Assistant Commissioner for External Affairs

Winston Berkman Breen
Student Borrower Protection Center

Ben Fuller-Googins
NYC Coalition for Domestic Work

Anh-Thu Nguyen
Democracy at Work Institute

Mohamed Attia
Street Vendor Project

Mimi Whittaker
National Employment Law Project, NELP

Salua Baida
Hand In Hand: The Domestic Employers Network

Ana I. Rodruz
Hopewell Care Cooperative

Clara Calvo
Cooperative Homecare Associates

Khandaker Taufiq Ahmed

Catherine Murcek
Samamkaya Yoga Back Care & Scoliosis Collective

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

Alex Stein

David Colodny
Catholic Migration Services

Melat Seyoum
NYC Network for Workers Cooperatives

Ofelia Salgado

Maria Gonzalez
Evan Casper-Futterman

Jorge Rosero
Chhaya CDC

Salua Baida
Hand In Hand: The Domestic Employers Network

Tito Sinha
Take Root Justice

Zade Haobsh
Grow Brooklyn

Shelley Miller
Worker Cooperative Business Development
Initiative

Ashley Chen
Chinese American Planning Council CPC

Gene Harriott-English
Street Vendors in Brooklyn

Jeehae Ronowski
Street Vendors Project

Sergei Rounovski
Street Vendor Project

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

Judith Rodino
Steet Vendors

Eliazar Campos
Street Vendor Project

Ysabel Rosario
Street Vendor Project

Jose Yos

Ligia Guallpa

Luis Cortes
Workers Justice Project

Ariel Mintz
Street Vendor Project

Mahmoud Zaed

Ashley Chen
Chinese American Planning Council

Monssa Ibrahim
Street Vendor Project

Cleotilde
Street Vendor Project

Rosario Tornado (SP?)
Street Vendor Project

Julian McKinley
Democracy at Work Institute

Christopher Leon Johnson
Protect Deliveristas

1 COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND WORKER PROTECTION 5

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Testing one, two. Today's
3 date is March 19, 2025. Today's Committee is on
4 Consumer and Worker Protection being recorded on the
5 14th Floor Committee Room being recorded by Keith
6 Polite.

7 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon, SPEAKING IN OTHER
8 LANGUAGE [00:00:38]- [00:01:16].

9 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
10 [00:01:19]- [00:02:02].

11 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
12 [00:02:08]- [00:02:28]

13 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
14 [00:02:33]- [00:02:58]

15 TRANSLATOR: [00:03:11]- [00:03:28]

16 TRANSLATOR: [00:03:35]- [00:04:01]
17 [00:04:01]- [00:04:22]

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: We're just having a technical
19 issue with the streaming, so give us a minute until
20 they resolve that, thank you. [00:04:27]-
21 [00:04:42].

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Okay, once again good
23 afternoon and welcome to the New York City
24 Preliminary Budget Hearing on the Committee on
25 Consumer and Worker Protection. At this time, please

1
2 silence all electronic devices. If you have any
3 questions, please raise your hand and one of us
4 Sergeant at Arms will kindly assist you.

5 [00:04:57]- [00:06:02]

6 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

7 [00:06:02]- [00:06:30].

8 [00:06:30]- [00:06:37]

9 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

10 [00:06:36]- [00:06:57].

11 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

12 [00:07:01]- [00:07:14].

13 [00:07:14]- [00:07:20]

14 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

15 [00:07:20]- [00:07:48]

16 [00:07:48]- [00:07:52]

17 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

18 [00:07:52]- [00:08:16].

19 [00:08:17]- [00:08:22]

20 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

21 [00:08:22]- [00:08:56].

22 [00:08:56]- [00:08:58]

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Chair, we may begin.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [GAVEL] Good afternoon and
25 welcome to the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget

1
2 Hearing. My name is Julie Menin and I am the Chair
3 of the Consumer and Worker Protection Committee.
4 Today, we'll be reviewing the proposed budget of the
5 Department of Consumer and Worker Protection,
6 specifically we will be assessing various DCWP
7 programs and activities to ensure that the agency is
8 serving the public in a fiscally responsible way as
9 well as meeting the needs of various New Yorkers.

10 First some contacts. The Fiscal 2026 Preliminary
11 Budget for the Department of Consumer and Worker
12 Protection totals \$75.1 million, which includes \$37.2
13 million in personal services to support 475 budgeted
14 full time positions. This is a sizable increase from
15 the Fiscal 2025 adopted budget and today we'll
16 discuss the reasons for this headcount increase as
17 well as the agencies vacancy rates.

18 DCWP's Fiscal 2026 budget also includes \$38
19 million for Other Than Personal Services to cover all
20 other general operating expenses of the department.
21 These funds are primarily allocated to resolve
22 consumer and worker complaints, issue a variety of
23 licenses, educate and protect consumers and of course
24 ensure that businesses comply with the law. At
25 today's hearing, we'll exam the components of DCWP's

1
2 budget. We plan to cover a number of topics and I
3 look forward to hearing about the agencies
4 performance, particularly as it relates to conducting
5 inspections and issuing summons.

6 We also plan to discuss the Office of Financial
7 Impairment and it's new youth financial empowerment
8 program. The Office of Financial Empowerment is a
9 very important part of DCWP, providing New Yorkers
10 with invaluable financial literacy tools. We'd like
11 to understand DCWP's goals for this new youth
12 program. How the program will be rolled out and how
13 DCWP will monitor and assess this program.

14 Last year, we spoke about what DCWP could do to
15 help keep tobacco products out of children's hands.
16 I want to note that since we last spoke about this,
17 compliance rates have risen as enforcement efforts
18 have increased.

19 I want to thank you and the agency for all of
20 your hard work in making this happen. We of course
21 want to remain vigilant and continue to press this
22 success to continue to reduce the amount of illicit
23 tobacco product sales in the city. DCWP is an agency
24 for every single New Yorker. I always like to say
25 there's no New Yorker that does not have a consumer

1
2 protection issue and it helps protect them from
3 harmful business practices and supports workers and
4 consumers in so many important ways. My own personal
5 history working at the agency gives me a unique
6 perspective on these issues that are of deep concern
7 to all of us. I look forward to this hearing on
8 DCWP's preliminary plan and our continued
9 collaboration and our efforts to ensure that New York
10 is safe for all New Yorkers.

11 So, with that said, thank you. I want to
12 acknowledge colleagues who are here. We have Council
13 Member Shaun Abreu on Zoom and I'll acknowledge
14 additional colleagues as they come in. So, now I
15 want to call on representatives of the Administration
16 to testify. We will be hearing testimony from
17 Commissioner Vilda Vera Mayuga, First Deputy
18 Commissioner Kenny Minaya, Minaya, sorry I mangled
19 that Minaya, General Counsel Michael Tiger and
20 Assistant Commissioner for External Affairs Carlos
21 Otiz. So, I'm going to turn it over to Committee
22 Counsel to administer the affirmation.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
24 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
25

1
2 before this Committee and to respond honestly to
3 Council Member questions?

4 PANEL: I do.

5 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you. Good afternoon
6 Chair Menin and members of the Committee on Consumer
7 and Worker Protection. I am Vilda Vera Mayuga,
8 Commissioner of the Department of Consumer and Worker
9 Protection, DCWP, and I am joined by First Deputy
10 Commissioner Kenny Minaya, General Counsel Michael
11 Tiger, and Assistant Commissioner for External
12 Affairs, Carlos Ortiz. Thank you for the opportunity
13 to be here today before this Committee to testify on
14 the work of our agency and its budget for Fiscal Year
15 2026.

16 DCWP is a key resource for all New Yorkers. Our
17 agency provides fundamental consumer and worker
18 protections and financial empowerment programming
19 across the five boroughs. We are dedicated to
20 ensuring that consumers who have been exploited or
21 deceived have a route to financial recourse, that
22 workers have a passionate defender of their rights
23 and that all New Yorkers have the tools and support
24 needed to better their financial health.

1
2 Our agency's efforts directly impact the lives of
3 New Yorkers and I am proud of the work we accomplish
4 every day for our city. Under my tenure, we have
5 helped deliver more than \$1.3 billion back to New
6 Yorkers through debt relieve, restitution and
7 financial empowerment programming. I'd like to thank
8 all of you for your consistent support and advocacy
9 of our agency's work. Today, I am happy to speak to
10 you about our successes in the last year, as well as
11 how we plan to continue and expand on that success.
12 Before I do, let me provide the Committee with some
13 important background information on the agency.

14 For Fiscal Year 2026, as you mentioned Chair,
15 DCWP's preliminary budget is approximately \$75
16 million, with an authorized headcount of 475 and an
17 active headcount of 399. We license more than 45,000
18 businesses in more than 40 different industries and
19 last year, our team conducted more than 54,000
20 inspections and completed over 1,100 investigations
21 on behalf of consumers and workers securing just over
22 \$13 million in monetary relief for New Yorkers. Our
23 Financial Empowerment Centers were visited by more
24 than 11,000 clients and the NYC Free Tax Prep
25

1
2 completed more than 100,000 tax returns for New
3 Yorkers.

4 DCWP serves as the city's central resource for
5 workers in New York City, and a dedicated voice in
6 city government for the issues workers face. DCWP
7 enforces key municipal workplace laws that provide
8 workers with greater stability in their schedules,
9 income and jobs. WE strive to ensure compliance with
10 these essential workplace laws and secure restitution
11 for workers who have faced violations in the
12 workplace. These consistent efforts led to our
13 agency securing nearly \$8 million in restitution for
14 workers across the city in 2024 and this includes our
15 enforcement of the Paid Safe and Sick Leave Law, our
16 cornerstone workplace law, which recently celebrated
17 its ten year anniversary, and the Fair Workweek Law.

18 We are always looking for new ways to protect and
19 promote labor standards and policies that create fair
20 workplaces for those in our city. 2024 was the first
21 full year that delivery workers earn a dignified pay,
22 and the impacts are astounding, which wages earned
23 increasing by \$700 million collectively. In just a
24 couple of weeks, the MPR will increase to \$21.44 to
25 reflect an inflation adjustment, so that those who

1
2 work so hard to keep us fed are able to care for
3 themselves and their families. I'd like to also
4 thank Council Members Nurse and Gutiérrez for their
5 proposals to expand the minimum pay rate to more of
6 our city's delivery workers with their legislations,
7 Introductions 1133 and 1135. We are ready and
8 excited to implement this expansion once the
9 legislation has been passed.

10 Lastly, we always pair our enforcement work with
11 education. To that end, we hit the ground running
12 last year after bringing back an updated version of
13 our popular Workers' Bill of Rights booklet. This
14 small booklet is a huge resource for workers,
15 providing them with an overview of integral City,
16 State and Federal workplace laws, as well as the
17 agency to contact should anyone experience a
18 violation of these laws. To increase knowledge of
19 this and our agencies other resources, our team work
20 to meet New Yorkers where they are, conducting nearly
21 300 outreach events for workers, reaching about
22 33,000 New Yorkers last year. This includes our Day
23 of Action, where my team and I visited major commuter
24 terminals across the five boroughs to pass out
25 materials to more than 10,000 New Yorkers in one day.

2 Since our landmark Consumer Protection Law was
3 enacted in 1969, we have been then nation's leading
4 municipal consumer protection agency. And for nearly
5 sixty years now we have consistently used our
6 authority to protect New Yorkers from deceptive
7 business practices, securing financial restitution
8 for consumers whose rights have been violated by bad
9 actors in the marketplace. Last year, our agency
10 issued nearly 19,000 summonses for violations of our
11 laws and returned \$5 million to consumers through
12 restitution and disbursements.

13 When we were here last year, we had just
14 implemented new rules for consumers that had been
15 taken advantage of by Home Improvement Contractors.
16 These new rules simplified the process for consumers
17 to receive compensation from the HIC trust fund, and
18 in 2024, we approved nearly 140 claims, distributing
19 nearly \$1.2 million to consumers. Our consumer
20 protection team worked diligently this past year to
21 hold deceptive and predatory businesses accountable
22 for their actions. Last year, our case against R.G.
23 Ortiz Funeral Homes brought aggrieved families more
24 than \$600,000 in restitution. Our team also took
25 action against the exploitative moving company,

1
2 Dorm2Dorm, securing more than \$3.75 million in
3 penalties and restitution. While our efforts serve
4 to make harmed consumers whole, they also send a
5 message that we can and will take action against
6 businesses that prey upon New Yorkers. Altogether,
7 our consumer protection team's efforts have played a
8 major role in the recovery of about \$25 million in
9 financial restitution and debt relief for consumers
10 under my tenure.

11 We are dedicated to providing protections to New
12 Yorkers while working to facilitate compliance
13 amongst businesses with the laws that we enforce.
14 Along with our consistent business outreach and
15 education events, our Visiting Inspector Program, or
16 VIP, provides new licensees the opportunity to
17 receive an educational visit from one of our
18 inspectors, and last year, we opened up VIP to all
19 brick and mortar retail businesses that are required
20 to be in compliance with our laws, regardless of
21 whether they are required to obtain a DCWP license.

22 In addition to providing key consumer and workers
23 protections, our agency also provides vital financial
24 empowerment resources to support individuals and help
25 households improve their financial health. This

1
2 year, we are celebrating ten years of the city's
3 dedicated investment in our New York City Free Tax
4 Prep program. This program offers city residents
5 access to free, professional tax preparation support
6 and filing. Our tax preparers are trained to help
7 New Yorkers maximize their tax refunds by optimizing
8 the use of various tax credits. This program also
9 includes our NYC Free Tax Prep for self-employed
10 individuals, offering specialized support for
11 freelancers, gig workers, small business owners, and
12 other self-employed New Yorkers filing their taxes.
13 Last year, our Coalition helped file more than
14 100,000 tax returns through NYC Free Tax Prep, saving
15 clients \$56.5 million in fees and helping secure more
16 than an estimated \$450 million in refunds for New
17 Yorkers under my tenure.

18 Our New York City Financial Empowerment Centers
19 provide opportunities for New Yorkers to meet with
20 trained counselors for one on one, confidential
21 financial counseling at no cost. These counselors
22 support individuals in reaching financial goals by
23 establishing budgets, creating spending plans,
24 opening safe and affordable bank accounts, and
25 navigating loan repayment, including student loan

1
2 debt. We are especially looking forward to expanding
3 our Financial Empowerment Centers to several NYC
4 Health + Hospitals locations this year. Last year,
5 we had almost 12,000 clients visit our centers, 9,000
6 of whom were first-time clients. As of the start of
7 this year, our professional counselors have helped
8 New Yorkers increase their savings by about \$16
9 million and reduce their debt by over \$120 million
10 since the opening of our centers. This is just one
11 of the many ways that our agency delivers for the
12 working people of New York.

13 As you all know, while we are one of the smaller
14 agencies, we are proud to have a rather large mandate
15 to provide protections to every person that lives,
16 works, or visits in our great city. Along those
17 lines, we are excited to broaden our work again this
18 year, bringing consumers and workers expanded
19 protections through our licensing of hotels, thanks
20 to Chair Menin's Safe Hotels Act and the hotel
21 industry is and always will be incredibly important
22 to the success of New York City, contributing \$74
23 billion to our local economy, serving millions of
24 consumers, and employing tens of thousands of
25 workers. DCWP joining other major cities across the

1
2 country, will enforce key protections for consumers
3 and workers in hotels, and help hotels build a
4 culture of compliance with our laws and rules.

5 Starting in June, we will also start enforcing
6 the ban on forced broker fees for tenants across the
7 five boroughs, thanks to Council Member Osse's FARE
8 Act. Our broker fee ban will join the list of our
9 various consumer and worker protections that help New
10 Yorkers keep more of their hard earned money. We
11 look forward to partnering with the Council on
12 outreach and education measures to support
13 implementation.

14 We will also be taking on two additional
15 initiatives, announced earlier this year. First,
16 together with the Department of Citywide
17 Administrative Services, we will launch a program for
18 300,000 New York City employees and their families to
19 help them manage their student loans.

20 This includes assistance enrolling in the Public
21 Service Loan Forgiveness Program, aiming to eliminate
22 more than \$360 million in student loan debt.

23 Secondly, something that I have been so
24 passionate about bringing to the forefront is our new
25 youth financial empowerment initiative with NYC

1
2 Public Schools. I have spoken here before about the
3 impact that our agency's financial education and
4 counseling had on me as an adult. However, a
5 resounding theme of our November public hearing on
6 financial empowerment was that the foundations of
7 financial health and success really begin in
8 childhood. By collaborating with NYC Public Schools,
9 our initiative will bid financially savvy New Yorkers
10 by providing meaningful financial empowerment
11 programming to address the needs of youth and their
12 families both in and outside of school environment.
13 We are so proud of this program and are excited to
14 roll out services that will help a new generation of
15 New Yorkers.

16 I'd like to thank you again for the opportunity
17 to present on our agency's work for our city and
18 residents. We are looking forward to this upcoming
19 fiscal year, continuing and expanding on our
20 commitment to provide core protections and resources
21 to New Yorkers. We remain resolute in our mission to
22 uplift New Yorker, protecting and enhancing their
23 daily economic lives, and we thank you for your
24 advocacy and support in our mission and work.

1
2 And as a final note, I would like to take the
3 opportunity to express my appreciation for my team,
4 that works so diligently each and every day for the
5 people of our city. It is with their dedication and
6 passion as public servants that we are consistently
7 able to deliver for New Yorkers. Thank you. I look
8 forward to answering your questions.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Wonderful, thank you so much
10 Commissioner. So, a couple things. I first want to
11 get into the headcount. So, the preliminary plan
12 includes a budget headcount 475 in fiscal 2026. This
13 is an increase of 21 when compared to the fiscal 2025
14 adopted plan. DCWP's current vacancy rate also
15 stands at 13.2 percent. So, given that a number of
16 questions.

17 So, what is the current active headcount and
18 vacancy rates for licensing and enforcement?

19 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you Council Member.
20 Our active headcount for licensing is 83 with 7
21 vacancies and enforcement is active 87 and 16
22 vacancies.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: So, in terms of this, let's
24 go to enforcement, the 16 vacancies. What is the
25

1
2 plan for those vacancies? And can you describe why
3 there are those vacancies?

4 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Sure thank you so much. I
5 don't have the breakdown of which are the positions
6 within enforcement but certainly an enforcement team
7 is with the inspectors right. You're familiar with
8 this as former Commissioner of our agency, where they
9 are the ones out going doing inspections of the
10 businesses and responding to complaints every day.

11 So, we are constantly having inspectors. It is a
12 practice that we are engaging almost every day with a
13 leadership within the agency, so I would say that
14 that number probably fluctuates a lot throughout the
15 year. This is as of February of this year, it's very
16 possible that it is already changed but the plan is
17 to continue the practice of hiring. We're constantly
18 also looking at where we are sending the inspectors.
19 We have a cadence that we follow for different types
20 of businesses that we you either license or we
21 regulate in one way or another. So, the plan is to
22 continue with the hiring not just with these
23 vacancies but for others. As you know we received
24 this 21 new line, so we're very excited to start
25 engaging in that work and I know that the team has

1
2 also shared those vacancies to all of the members so
3 they can help us promote them.

4 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yeah, I just wanted to add to that
5 that some of those - I think some of the vacancies in
6 the enforcement division do reflect that we received
7 new lines thanks to your advocacy. And so, those did
8 push up our vacancy numbers a little bit but we're
9 working out to actively hire those.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And are you experiencing any
11 delays with OMB in terms of the hiring process and if
12 so, what can be done to rectify that?

13 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you. Well, the 21 new
14 ones, we are just moving those as fast as we can.
15 I'll post that, so we're promoting them and again,
16 anybody who's also listening, please let us know if
17 you need the direct link and we're happy to send
18 them.

19 I mean before that, we testified before that we
20 had - we were in a strict hiring freeze, so there's
21 obviously that impact on our vacancies but very
22 excited about the new needs that were approved, the
23 21 lines. It's going to make a huge impact and we'll
24 continue to do that work and keep maximizing the
25 resources that are allocated to us.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, I also want to note
3 we've been joined by Majority Leader Farias and
4 Council Member Krishnan. Okay, so we're going to
5 continue down the issues of the vacancy rate. So,
6 which units have the highest vacancy rates currently?

7 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes Council Member, so I
8 don't have the unit number because of the titles
9 going across various divisions but I can tell you
10 that our highest vacancy rate at the moment is our
11 marketing team and our Office of Financial
12 Empowerment.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And considering that you have
14 a relatively high vacancy rate of 13.2 percent, how
15 do you expect then to fill the 21 lines?

16 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Well, part of that is that
17 we're not - those 21 new lines are not subject to the
18 two for one that other vacancies in the agency are
19 through you know OMB and so that's going to
20 definitely help us. It is new mandate is new
21 initiative. Our agency as you know, we have a really
22 wonderful culture and we'll keep spreading the word
23 about these positions to bring people in to doing
24 this amazing work with us.

1
2 CARLOS ORTIZ: I think to add to that, we have
3 those 21 lines that are exempt from the two for one.
4 We also have certain revenue generating positions in
5 the inspectors and attorneys that are also exempt
6 from the two for one. And of course, if anything
7 that does apply to two for one, that's an active
8 conversation that we're having with OMB all the time
9 to move through approvals as expeditiously as we can.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And given the high vacancy
11 rate, how is that effecting the ability to enforce
12 fines and summonses?

13 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Well, I mean I think our
14 numbers are still higher than prior years you know as
15 we continue to target different areas of the work
16 that we do. Tobacco certainly continues to be an
17 area of focus because as you mentioned at the opening
18 of our hearing, it is an area where we do continue to
19 get the most complaints. So, I'd like to see - to
20 focus on the numbers that are coming out of the work
21 that we're doing, so we're always going to be looking
22 at what are the trends for the complaints that are
23 coming, any issues that are raised that warrant us to
24 do something differently or focus for a particular
25 period of time to make sure that address concerns

1
2 that are raised through complaints or Council Members
3 or other elected officials in our communities in
4 general.

5 CARLOS ORTIZ: I think also across some of our
6 work, we've been able to implement a lot of
7 technological improvements to facilitate enforcement,
8 whether that's consumer protection or worker
9 protection and I can think of you know algorithmic
10 tools; I'm sorry, I can't say that word, uhm to help
11 us identify targets and recidivist actors I think in
12 consumer protection space and also how our data signs
13 has helped us on the worker protection analyzing
14 through data where we see from certain employers.

15 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: In terms of the two for one,
16 what positions are currently exempt? How many
17 positions would you say across the agency?

18 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: So, in terms of the two for
19 one, the new lines are all exempt, the 21 and then
20 generally, it's going to be the revenue generating
21 ones, which are all of our inspectors. Anything else
22 we should add?

23 CARLOS ORTIZ: Sorry Chair. Certain attorney's
24 as well that have a closeness next to generating

1
2 revenue are exempt on a case by case basis based on
3 our discussions with OMB.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay and are you concerned
5 perhaps that given the vacancy rate, that the
6 salaries are not competitive? Because that, I mean,
7 it just seems like the obvious, one of the obvious
8 issues here.

9 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you. Thank you Chair,
10 I mean it certainly - we want to attract top talent
11 to our agency and the work that we do. We are bound
12 by the guidelines of Civil Service titles and what
13 are the salaries that are allocated to those. We
14 will always you know be welcoming conversations about
15 anything that needs to change in that respect. I
16 think we'll probably have to include DCAS in those
17 conversations as well for any changes in title.

18 CARLOS ORTIZ: I think there are also other ways
19 that we have focused on being able to get new talent
20 and retain talent. I think number one is the culture
21 of the agency that we've built up over these past few
22 years, even prior to that and also, the Public
23 Service Loan Forgiveness program that we're working
24 on closely with DCAS to help city employees be able
25

1
2 to work through that program and enroll and
3 ultimately get student loan debt forgiven too.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, I want to move to
5 closing cases and some of the metrics around how
6 quickly the agency is able to close cases. So, the
7 percentage of cases that DCWP has closed in under 50
8 days during the first four months of Fiscal 2025 was
9 76 percent down from 88 percent in the same time
10 period last year.

11 So, do you believe that DCWP's high vacancy rates
12 are effecting how quickly you're able to close out
13 some of these cases and provide relief?

14 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you Council Member. I
15 think, I mean let me start by saying obviously I
16 think generally more research as you end up doing
17 more work and maybe faster but I do think there's a
18 number of factors that will always impact the numbers
19 on a year to year basis, depending on the [INAUDIBLE
20 00:35:53 and trends and things like that but I will
21 say that specifically also if I can point out to
22 mediations, we do still do those in that time period
23 and hitting our 28 days target to resolve those. So,
24 that is something that has continued and we'll always
25 be tracking internally. We don't wait you know for

1
2 the MMR to come out or anything like that. We're
3 constantly monitoring and making sure that if any
4 adjustments are necessary, whether it is the approach
5 that we're taking with our cases like on a one to one
6 basis or also technological improvements that we can
7 make as Assistant Commissioner Ortiz mentioned, we're
8 going to be looking at those. But right now, you
9 know we are - we see that we're hitting that target
10 especially as it relates to mediations.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, I have a number of
12 additional questions but I'm going to turn it over to
13 my colleagues. Council Member Krishnan I know has
14 some questions.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Sure. First of all,
16 thanks so much Chair for this hearing and thank you
17 Commissioner and your team for your testimony. I
18 just had a couple questions. One, I know you
19 addressed it a bit in your opening statement but I
20 did see your op-ed recently about financial education
21 empowerment for students and so I think that's really
22 important and I thought it was very well written out.
23 I just want to get a better sense of what that work
24 is involving, how it's going so far. I mean from a
25 budgetary standpoint, what that might require to?

2 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you and yes, I am
3 absolutely obsessed with this topic and I think you
4 know we all take obviously from our personal
5 experiences and I have two young kids myself, so I
6 really want to make sure that they and others receive
7 the support and the tools that they need so that they
8 become - by the time they become adults right, they
9 know what to do. And the way that that's going to be
10 looking like is that we have three components to our
11 approach to financial empowerment and youth. We
12 certainly are building on our proven track record
13 right of success of financial empowerment for adults.
14 So, right now, we're actively working with NYC Public
15 Schools to identify the school districts where we
16 will launch in January of 2026. And so, that's the
17 first component. We are looking to place financial
18 educators in a number of districts starting in
19 January. These financial educators are sort of like
20 that glue that's going to keep it all together within
21 the district that they're assigned to. And that
22 means developing workshops that will be provided by
23 these educators to not only students but also to the
24 teachers and the parents and guardians and everybody
25 that is supporting our youth in our New York City

1
2 Public Schools. Those workshops also are meant to be
3 to generation, right so it's not just for the
4 students but also for the adults so that know how to
5 support their youth.

6 In addition to that, we are also building a
7 resource hub so that we can have a repository of
8 information and tools that are available that are
9 culturally competent and the various issues that our
10 youth need to tackle and learn at the various ages
11 since we obviously want to make sure that we are
12 targeting primarily from middle school up because
13 research has shown that that is just a sweet spot
14 where we want to make sure that there is this
15 intervention happening and the knowledge that is
16 being passed through.

17 As we expand right, I mean the goal is to expand
18 and have a financial educator in every school
19 district by 2030. So, we're very excited about that.
20 Like I said, we are very close to identifying and
21 sharing the locations of where we'll have these
22 financial educators starting in January and then that
23 will be paired with the conversations that we're
24 having with financial institutions to launch in
25 school banking as well, so that we can develop and

1
2 promote safe banking and asset building within our
3 youth and then the last component is that we want to
4 make sure that we teach the youth how to interact
5 with money. How to develop the proper behavior about
6 it through a match savings program and make sure that
7 they understand what that means and what that looks
8 like as they enter adulthood.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thanks very much and
10 it's really important, by the way I gave my kid \$10,
11 my six year old for a bookfair yesterday and he came
12 back with a basketball poster and an iPhone pencil
13 case, so I think this financial education is really
14 important for six year olds too. But I'm glad to
15 hear this too and also just a couple more questions.
16 I just want to follow up on that. Is that going to
17 be paired up in any way? Are you guys working with
18 NYC Kids Rise that Chair Menin started and created?
19 I think it's a great program. It's very popular in
20 my district and my school, which is one of the pilots
21 for it. Are you all partnering together and working
22 on that together, both programs?

23 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you, yes, absolutely
24 thank you to Chair Menin. We are - I mean, I don't
25 know how much you know but I do sit in the board of

1
2 New York City Kids Rise and as a boardman, so does
3 the Chancellor and so does the Deputy Mayor for
4 Strategic Initiatives. So, very much part of the
5 city and how we work. We hold the contract for New
6 York City Kids Rise so we serve as a passthrough
7 conduit for the funds that they get distributed to
8 the kids. Yes, we'll be working together. They as
9 you know right they fund the accounts in kindergarten
10 for the kids and they continue the partnership and
11 the work throughout the years to try to encourage the
12 families to understand this asset that they have now
13 to further the education of the youth. And so there,
14 I know they started in one particular district and
15 those students are now in middle school so it's going
16 to be sort of like a nice timing as we launch our
17 financial educators and see the kids that are
18 participating in the NYC Kids Rise program be part of
19 that. So very much part of the conversation.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Great to hear. And
21 then I just had two short questions Chair, if that's
22 okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Of course.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: One was here's taking a
25 step back on the budget. You know I think one of the

1
2 big things and you all have the mandate from a
3 legislative standpoint to enforce a lot of the laws
4 and you know the FARE Act, for example, other
5 programs too but I know it as well that you know if
6 we don't have the enforcement resources behind it
7 then the laws aren't working on the paper they're
8 written on. Do you all feel you have the different
9 programs and the legislation we're passing, do you
10 feel like you have the resources you need to actually
11 enforce them across the boroughs, given the high
12 needs that we're seeing now in these issues?

13 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: So, Council Member, let me
14 start by saying that one of the things that I'm super
15 proud of at least under my tenure is that we've been
16 really focused on making sure that the work that we
17 do is aligned with our mission. So, some of you
18 having part right of conversations that we're having
19 and making sure that the work that we do is what we
20 are - we exist to do. So, if there's something that
21 doesn't really make sense, plain language for our
22 work, we try to work with other agencies that make
23 sure that in partnership with the Council we
24 accomplish that, right? I mean we've done it in a
25 number of ways. And in terms of the work that we do,

1
2 as you said, I mean very excited again for the new
3 needs that were granted. I cannot thank all of you
4 enough for the advocacy. It's made a huge difference
5 for us to yes receive new needs. 21 new lines is
6 big. It is really wonderful and the work that we're
7 doing is going to be very impactful from the whole to
8 Licensing Act the Broker Fee Bill to hopefully expand
9 in the MPR protections for which yes, we did put in a
10 new needs for that as well because we want to make
11 sure that we can do the work. So, particularly as it
12 relates to the ones that are coming under this
13 Council and we have this very open and honest
14 conversation, I am delighted to see the support and
15 to see the result of that support and advocacy come
16 in terms of new needs approved for us.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Got it, thank you and
18 finally you know talking about those in legislation,
19 as you all know one of my priority bills too is
20 around the unfair deactivations of taxi drivers and
21 for hire vehicle drivers. As we keep pushing forward
22 and working on legislation, it's my understanding
23 from the past hearings that DCWP is still supportive
24 overall the legislation and moving forward. Is that
25 still the case?

1
2 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you. Yes, we do
3 support it. That wasn't was I was asking by the way.
4 When I sent the idea that yeah, I just wanted to give
5 you a full answer because we were just talking about
6 resources. So, we just haven't got into that part
7 right of establishing what new needs there may be
8 depending on our role for that legislation but yes, I
9 mean it goes along the lines of what I was saying
10 earlier with expansion of the minimum pay rate as
11 well and things related to it that relate to our
12 delivery workers or those similarly situated.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Great, thank you very
14 much.

15 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: One more thing from my
16 Assistant Commissioner.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Sure.

18 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yeah, I just wanted to add Council
19 Member, I think of course certainly supportive of the
20 legislation with respect to deactivations for for
21 hire vehicle drivers. I know also the thing here we
22 flagged as well that there is - there are
23 deactivation and scheduling concerns that happen in
24 the third party restaurant delivery sector as well.
25 I think that's another important part of the

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

conversation to include here. I think in both those instances, for hire vehicle drivers or restaurant delivery folks that there is a certain precariousness to how they're engaged as drivers and those riders. So, I think for us, we certainly would be very excited to continue the conversation on this legislation and additionally work with you and work with OMB for any fiscal impacts we have on that bill in particular.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Great, thank you very much. Thank you Chair.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much. I want to acknowledge we have been joined by Council Member Brewer and Council Member Cabàn who is on Zoom and now, while we still have quorum, I am going to turn it over to Council Member Cabàn who has some questions. She needs to be unmuted.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you. Thank you can you all hear me, okay?

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Wonderful, thank you and just to all the folks from DCWP, I just - I know the work is really hard now especially under this federal environment. I think now more than ever see you all

1
2 as really, really critical frontline defenders of
3 workers, so appreciate the work that you're doing. I
4 want to start by asking about gaps in New York City's
5 retail scheduling protections. You know specifically
6 we know that these laws play an important role in
7 protecting retail workers at stores across the city
8 but what we're hearing from labor organizers and
9 certainly what I'm hearing from labor organizers in
10 the sector is that they don't necessarily apply to
11 all workers involved in the retail industry. So, for
12 example, retail delivery services and Amazon
13 fulfillment centers and my question for you all is
14 like do these laws need to be extended?

15 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you Council Member.
16 I'm going to have my Assistant Commissioner of
17 External Affairs share a little bit more detail about
18 where we are, what we've seen, what we're finding and
19 where we see collaboration with the City Council to
20 improve worker protections.

21 CARLOS ORTIZ: Well, I think uhm, just to stress
22 I think what you're hearing is actually correct
23 Council Member in the sense that there you know
24 certain retail places across the city, retail
25 warehouses where existing FARE work week scheduling

1
2 protections don't necessarily apply. Perhaps because
3 of the time of FARE Workweek, the first being enacted
4 that those were just not a - they were not a norm for
5 the city and I think to the extent that workers are
6 in those spaces and that they have analogous roles
7 and analogous positions as what FARE Workweek
8 contemplated in the original legislation. I think
9 that's something we'd love to look into in
10 coordination with you folks.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Great, glad to hear it.
12 And then my next question is just around the fast
13 food workers protections from back in 2021. So
14 obviously with our city and thanks to you all has
15 very successfully instituted the just cause
16 protections for those fast food workers. And you
17 know while federal worker protections and
18 antidiscrimination efforts are obviously under
19 attack, I think it's going to be even more important
20 for New York City to be able to ensure like safe and
21 stable working environment for New Yorkers. As you
22 all are aware, I have that bill called the Secure Job
23 Act which would create universal just cause
24 protections for nonunion workers in New York City.
25 So, my next question is, are you all familiar with

1
2 this bill? Do you think it's important at a time
3 when the federal government is attacking labor rights
4 that just specifically that just cause protections
5 are extended to all workers?

6 COSTA ORTIZ: Thank you Council Member. I think
7 well, to start I would say that just cause
8 protections in the fast food space I think have been
9 incredibly important for those workers and I know
10 when we testified in the past at that hearing, that
11 the factual record certainly ensured that - or let me
12 say, the factual record always demonstrated that this
13 protection was needed in the fast food industry as
14 well. I think you know just since in 2024, we've had
15 52 complaints. We've opened 29 cases. We've closed
16 another 23 cases. We recently announced a good
17 resolution for a worker in the just cause fast food
18 context. So, I think it's certainly working there
19 and with respect to your bill, I'm more familiar with
20 the version that was introduced last session. I
21 think to the extent that we can have a conversation
22 about how we could extend those protections and what
23 needs to be put in place for that, I think it's
24 something we're always open to.

1
2 We, I think the Commissioner has always told me
3 that we want to be in the room for these
4 conversations. I think we bring a lot of expertise
5 for how things can be implemented and the policies
6 that need to be put in place and we're always willing
7 partners in that sense.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Absolutely and we got to
9 get you all money, more money. I know Council Member
10 Krishnan was asking you know about additional funding
11 and things like that and I was curious as well to
12 even go further and ask you know what you could do
13 with extra money if you got it in terms of
14 protections like that. And then you know paired with
15 that, my last question for you all and then I'll hand
16 it back over to the Chair is just, you know how are
17 the federal government's actions under the Trump
18 Administration impacting local labor rights
19 enforcement and what steps is DCWP taking to
20 strengthen those protections in response specifically
21 and again you know I know it's a hard question to ask
22 sometimes in the context of these or answer in the
23 context of these hearings but you know what more do
24 you need and what could you do with some more
25 resources and money in your agency?

2 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you Council Member. I
3 mean I say this all the time in any presentation
4 especially as even outside of this room, right?
5 Because when we're talking to New Yorkers, they're
6 not necessarily you know watching these hearings and
7 so, we try to always make it a point to stress to all
8 New Yorkers in our outreach and education that we're
9 here to serve every single person. Immigration
10 doesn't really matter to us as you know. It's not
11 even a question we ever ask. Sometimes you know
12 people are like, oh how many of these you know
13 individuals you serve? It's just, I can't even tell
14 you because we just don't ask the question but we do
15 stress that we are here for every single New Yorker
16 and I think many people can attest to that as well.

17 In terms of you know from the what's happening in
18 the federal government, we know that for example, the
19 NLRB right, it's somebody that is impacting workers.
20 They do focus on a little bit of a different area
21 than we do but we are certainly here for New Yorkers
22 and all workers and we want people to come forward.
23 We want people to ask for assistance. We have a very
24 accessible online complaint form and also online a
25 way to ask a question if people are not yet ready to

1
2 file a complaint or they just want to get
3 information. And then similarly, we are always
4 working on making sure that we have strong
5 relationships with community based organizations that
6 are in direct contact with our communities across the
7 city to ensure that they know they can come to us and
8 they can file the complaints and we will be quite -
9 advocate to make sure that we obtain any restitution
10 that they're entitled to when there's been violations
11 of the law.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you. I really,
13 really appreciate it and thank you Chair. Oh, go
14 ahead Assistant Commissioner, sorry.

15 CARLOS ORTIZ: Sorry Council Member I didn't mean
16 -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: No, go for it please.

18 CARLOS ORTIZ: But uhm and just to reiterate an
19 earlier point when we were discussion some
20 legislation that we testified in support of, I know
21 in terms of the minimum pay rate expansion that we've
22 contemplated 19 new positions under for that
23 expansion. That would be really a mix of
24 investigators, attorneys and data scientists, and the
25

1
2 data scientists piece is particularly important for
3 the enforcement work in that space.

4 And then I know in Council Member Menin's
5 important bill too regarding notification to
6 complainants about fast food workers complaints and
7 in FARE Workweek complaints in general. I think
8 that's another bill that we're very supportive of and
9 that has an FIS that's public as well in the
10 legistar.

11 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: And one more thing because
12 Council Member, you really opened up the door for us
13 to share some of the thing that we're working on.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Please.

15 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Because our jurisdiction
16 basically, you know you were mentioning obviously
17 some things that may be more related to workers but
18 we are the consumer protection agency as well, we
19 served in 1969. So, coming on almost 60 years so I
20 actually wanted General Counsel Mike Tiger to share
21 some of the things that we're also looking into
22 considering what's happening at the federal
23 government especially with the consumer protection
24 bureau and related agencies.

1
2 MICHAEL TIGER: Yeah, I mean I think we're all
3 aware of like how dire the situation right now is in
4 DC for the federal consumer protection, regulatory
5 agencies. So, we're definitely taking a close look
6 at where we can fill in the spaces based on the
7 hampering at best of the CFPB Consumer Financial
8 Protection Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission.
9 We're looking at where we can - looking at junk fees,
10 which was a very big initiative by the Biden
11 Administration and the previous administration with
12 the Federal Trade Commission and that's something
13 we're looking at something if we can do some rule
14 making this calendar year and we, as you may know
15 license debt collection agencies in the Save New York
16 and have consumer protection rules devoted to debt
17 collection and we are going to do another round of
18 rulemaking. We're really looking at where we can get
19 - where we can fill in spaces where we have once
20 assumed that the federal government could really take
21 the leadership role on and I think especially in
22 something like debt collection, we really would like
23 to invite all of you as you are talking to people in
24 your community to make sure that complaints that they
25 may have in the first instance have gone to those

1
2 federal regulators, make sure we're open for
3 business. We have a business port. We have a portal
4 for people that we recently set up just last year
5 that we're very proud. That makes it easier to file
6 consumer complaints and we really encourage all of
7 you when you're talking to constituents, to talking
8 to stakeholders in your communities, to file
9 complaints with us.

10 Again, especially on issues that maybe in the
11 first instance you would have thought, oh the CFPB is
12 going to handle that or the FTC is going to handle
13 that. So, we have an eye towards sort of developing
14 that sort of agenda over the course of this year.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Makes a lot of sense,
16 thank you and thank you Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Absolutely. So, I just want
18 to continue on that line on the CFPB because given
19 the firings there at the Federal Trade Commission.
20 Have you tried to hire some of those individuals
21 because no, in all serious, I mean they're experts in
22 consumer protection? It would be great to reach out
23 to them and see if they'll come work for the largest
24 municipal consumer protection agency in the country.

1
2 MICHAEL TIGER: Yeah, I mean we have a lot of
3 colleagues and former colleagues that were working at
4 these agencies, so we're in touch with a lot of
5 people and we have several open lines for consumer
6 protection attorneys and we have been in contact with
7 people and encourage people to apply for those open
8 positions. But again, I want to encourage all of you
9 as well. If you have people that you know from your
10 circles that were working in these agencies or have a
11 touchpoint or newly invigorated passion for consumer
12 or worker protection due to what's happening in
13 Washington DC, please go to New York City Jobs and
14 look at the positions that are open and please send
15 in their resumes. I mean this is definitely
16 something we are actively looking at.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yeah absolutely and then the
18 other thing is we want to make sure on new needs and
19 I know we talked about obviously the 21 lines which
20 is fantastic but given what is happening in
21 Washington, you are going to need new needs because
22 it's going to be up to cities to take the lead and
23 so, it's certainly going to be up to DCWP being on
24 the frontline to push back against this deregulation
25 on consumer protection, which is going to endanger so

1
2 many New Yorkers and people obviously all across the
3 country. But I want to take - I know that Majority
4 Leader Farias had some questions, so let me turn it
5 over to her.

6 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Thank you Chair. I have
7 had some of the questions already asked by colleagues
8 but a couple that are in our documents struck me.
9 I'm a huge sports fan so I've been to a couple of the
10 arenas and the stadiums throughout the city over the
11 last couple of seasons we've had this year and the
12 5050 raffle bill that we passed a couple years ago
13 has always intrigued me. We approved or the Mayor
14 signed it into law May 2023 and it allows the sports
15 organizations and the city's to use their venues to
16 hold raffles and other games of chance to raise money
17 on behalf of charities. Do you folks have how many
18 licenses DCWP awarded for these raffles since the
19 passage of the bill?

20 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: We are actively as soon as we
21 heard you that that was the topic where we're just
22 checking what those numbers are but it's definitely,
23 we do know that it's having a positive impact in
24 making sure that more money also can be raised for
25 the charities that can benefit through this as well.

1
2 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Sure and do we know, do
3 we have a list of which charities have actually
4 received any of the raised dollars? And I ask this
5 question only because a couple of stadiums that I've
6 been to, for example when they're doing their 5050
7 raffles, they're solely doing it for their stadiums
8 foundation and not necessarily for an individualized
9 nonprofit organization or charitable organization.

10 So, I'm just wondering how we're monitoring the
11 licenses that are going out and how are we monitoring
12 the dollars received?

13 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: I think we want to make sure
14 that we give you as much detail as possible, so I
15 don't want to just throw numbers here. I can say
16 that the two main organizations are the Mets and the
17 Yankees who got those licenses to do the 5050 raffle.
18 If you are okay with it, I'd love to just give you
19 the details of that as a follow up to make sure that
20 we are accurate on the numbers and the list of any
21 charities.

22 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Yeah, that's fine.

23 CARLOS ORTIZ: I would add to that. I mean we
24 could get you a list of the charities as well but in
25 general, the licensees net proceeds in total, I think

1
2 sums upwards of \$2.8 million and that's based off of
3 the legislation that you mentioned that was passed
4 and went into effect. So, I think it's had a
5 substantial impact on I guess the activity of these
6 two organizations but also what they've been able to
7 contribute back into the community through charity.
8 So, I think we -

9 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Yeah, I mean I think
10 that's I'd love to connect offline on it. It's
11 something that I've been kind of waiting to come back
12 around to just to kind of give folks time to actually
13 do you know based off of the sports seasons that we
14 have given each of the folks the ability to go back
15 to it. My only concern has been any other games that
16 I've gone to, it's only gotten back to for those
17 examples Yankee Foundation or Mets Foundation. I
18 think even MSG or the Knicks also have a foundation
19 that is doing 5050 but us ensuring that those dollars
20 are actually - a majority of those dollars or a
21 portion of those dollars are not just going back to
22 those already massively revenue generating
23 organizations and the impact of the bill is actually
24 being seen throughout our community.

2 So, I'd love to offline hear more about the list
3 of charitable organizations that are partnered with
4 and what dollar amounts that we're seeing in terms of
5 licensing coming back to the city, so appreciate it.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, uhm, I have a lot more
7 questions but I'll turn it over to Council Member
8 Brewer first.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Thank you
10 very much. One of my questions is, in terms of
11 licensing, can you explain how the agency's overlap -
12 how your agency overlaps with other agencies? This
13 year as you know, I've spent a lot of time in the
14 smoke shops. I've spent a lot of time with battery,
15 lithium stores. I spent a lot of time thanks to
16 Barzini's in the grocery store world. So, and you're
17 involved with all of them. I can mention all the
18 other agencies. So, I just want to know is there an
19 overlap? Is that something that gets coordinated
20 etc.? How does that work?

21 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you Council Member.
22 Yes, we definitely work with a lot of other agencies
23 to make sure that we're bringing the expertise that
24 we have in different areas and I can tell you that we
25 do have one individual that's with the Mayor's Office

1
2 of Assessments and we do have ten inspectors and
3 inspector supervisors assigned to the Chairs
4 Interagency Enforcement Taskforce, where as you know
5 we've been doing tobacco enforcement and e-cigarettes
6 for a very long time. So, we bring our expertise to
7 those areas.

8 Like you mentioned with Local Law 39, the Fire
9 Department, we coordinate with them in enforcement of
10 that, especially since last year, we received that
11 additional tool to conduct ceilings, so we are always
12 in contact with them to make sure that we are
13 following up on those. And then, we also have work
14 that we do with the Department of Health and Mental
15 Hygiene, processing their licenses. That is one area
16 where there's a lot of lines involved and I'd love to
17 have First Deputy Commissioner Kenny Minaya give you
18 more detail on that.

19 KENNY MINAYA: Thank you for the question Council
20 Member, so 58 of the lines at the agency, the
21 authorized headcount are funded by DOHMH to do DOHMH
22 licensing. So, since we have the licensing centers,
23 it's more efficient for the last 30 years to have
24 their staff at the licensing center to receive the
25

1
2 applications, process them, and then DOHMH applies
3 the final approval.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. So, then in terms
5 of headcount, how many of your lines are reassigned
6 to City Hall? So, it will be the ten for the Mayor's
7 Office of Assessments. I thought I knew everything
8 but I never heard of that office. And then, are
9 there others? Because I'm confused.

10 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: One is for the Mayor's Office
11 of Municipal Assessments. Ten are in the Sheriff's
12 Office.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay so it's ten in the
14 Sheriff's and one for the assessments?

15 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And that's it in terms of
17 what I would say is reassignments?

18 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Correct.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, pedicabs, what are
20 we doing about pedicabs?

21 VILA VERA MAYUGA: Well, we license them. We
22 certainly do the -

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I get in. They say
24 \$20.00. I say hell no. I passed a bill; you are
25 illegally asking me for \$20.00. So, let's start

1
2 negotiating right now. That's what I do when I get
3 in but I'm not - and then I pull out my badge. I'm
4 the norm. They are getting ripped off. Go ahead I'm
5 sorry.

6 VILA VERA MAYUGA: Yeah, we do a lot of work with
7 the Parks Department and NYPD. On enforcement to
8 pedicabs, I'll have Assistant Commissioner Ortiz give
9 a little bit more detail there.

10 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yeah, I think uhm; to start
11 broadly, I think long term there is definitely a need
12 for reevaluating the pedicab category and its
13 licensing structure to ensure that the city has its
14 tools available to monitor compliance, to facilitate
15 better compliance among the industry. Short term,
16 what we've been doing is working with the Deputy
17 Mayor's Office of Public Safety, the Parks
18 Department, NYPD to coordinate interagency actions in
19 high pedicab activity areas.

20 Of course, PD and Parks always have the on street
21 enforcement authority and capacity but we're there as
22 well as the expertise as a licensing category, as a
23 licensing agency I'm sorry. I think you know for
24 example recently just last week I believe it was we
25 held a DCWP 101 for the pedicab industry to help them

1
2 understand how to be compliant with Local Laws
3 pricing for example but ultimately there's a lot of
4 unlicensed activity happening out there. So, I think
5 for us, we have these short term solutions we're
6 working on with City Hall but I think long term there
7 needs to be certain changes and we want to talk about
8 that too.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know Central Park
10 Conservancy would like to have them as a licensee.
11 That would maybe be Parks. You got two deals; you
12 got the ones Midtown and you got the ones in the park
13 and they don't always talk to each other.

14 CARLOS ORTIZ: Well, I think it's a really, you
15 know -

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's a complicated
17 industry.

18 CARLOS ORTIZ: It's a complicated industry
19 because there's a license for business and the
20 business is allowed a certain amount of cabs that are
21 registered to them and then there's licenses for the
22 drivers but often times you know the drivers are not
23 - they're not the same year to year although the
24 businesses perhaps are the same year to year so
25 something that would be I think certainly helpful is

1
2 how do we bring a bigger stick against the businesses
3 that are always here and our I wouldn't say
4 encouraging but perhaps our incentives for the
5 driver's that they're engaging with to break the law.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah and there are just a
7 few owners that are not so clear as to who they are.

8 CARLOS ORTIZ: And I do want to mention that
9 certainly if any consumer has been deceived by a
10 pedicab, that comes to us. We mediate that complaint
11 but if there's you know traffic issues, street safety
12 issues that should really go to the Police Department
13 or Parks.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay and then finally
15 just my favorite topic, paid sick days. I know you
16 mentioned it in your testimony. I just want to know
17 if there's a final dollar amount in terms of what's
18 been collected in terms of fines and then just
19 generally, how is the law being carried out? How is
20 it going and does it need changing?

21 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes, thank you so much.
22 There's definitely you know these are signature
23 worker protection, a law that we enforce and so, I
24 just want to get you the number on what was collected
25 related to those cases last year.

1
2 Okay, sorry, I want to make sure we have found
3 the number correctly. As it relates to Paid Safe and
4 Sick Leave Law in 2024, we collected \$3.9 million in
5 restitution for workers.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Other needs for changes
7 or you think it's working appropriately?

8 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes, there are some pending
9 legislation that I know we've testified to also to
10 make sure that we expand these protections. I'll
11 give you; I'll have Assistant Commissioner Ortiz give
12 you those details.

13 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yeah, I'm sorry, I'm sorry for the
14 confusion. Introduction 780-

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, I'm never confused
16 Assistant Commissioner.

17 CARLOS ORTIZ: Introduction 780 is a bill that we
18 testified in support of recently that would expand
19 the opportunity for how folks can use their Paid Safe
20 and Sick Leave. For example, attending a public
21 benefits hearing, child care. I believe RFIS is on a
22 legistar for that as well for at least four to six
23 new lines and I think that's another step forward for
24 Paid Safe and Sick Leave and how we can broaden its
25 use by New Yorkers.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Great thank you. So, I know that Council Member Krishnan asked about NYC Kids Rise and I do have a question on that because as you know I was very proud to create that program almost nine years ago. We've now seated close to 280,000 students with a college savings account, which is just incredible but I am concerned about the PEG to the program of \$2.3 million and what that will mean for the future of the program. Can you talk a little bit about that?

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you. Thank you Council Member. Agree, it is an important program and as you heard it's always something that we're partnering with because of the financial empowerment component. We both, New York City Kids Rise and the city through us cares very much about it.

The PEG, yes, it resulted in that reduction of funding for NYC Kids Rise. The amount, the contribution was not compromised. All of the accounts were still funded at the amount that the city has been committed. And so it was more about rightsizing the administration of the program as it

1
2 pertains to the money that they were receiving
3 through us.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And any update on any kind of
5 restoration of that moving forward?

6 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: I'm not aware of any at the
7 moment.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, okay a couple things -
9 I'm going back to where we were on budget related
10 requests. So, the preliminary plan includes just \$5
11 million in new funding for DCWP and while obviously
12 and we've talked about this and we're thrilled about
13 the 21 new lines but the agency is constantly being
14 asked to do so many new functions. You're always
15 being asked to do more with less and as you know, I
16 continue to be concerned about that. The number of
17 complaints has been trending upwards as well. And
18 so, were there any new needs you requested that were
19 not funded in the Prelim Plan?

20 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you Council Member and
21 again, a huge help to have your support, especially
22 with your knowledge of the agency. We didn't get
23 three lines when we put in for the fiscal, for the
24 new needs for the combined hotel licensing and broker
25 fee bill.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And speaking of that, can you
3 talk about the 21 lines? How are they going to be
4 divided up in terms of functionality? I know that
5 they're going to be focused on the Safe Hotels Act
6 and the FARE Act. Could you talk a little bit about
7 what will the breakdown and responsibilities be?

8 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Sure, definitely. We have
9 the 11 new lines for the broker fees and hotel
10 licensing. I can tell you that out of those 11, 7
11 are for enforcement, including 6 with general counsel
12 and 1 with the enforcement unit, and then 4 are for
13 licensing. And then we have the other 10 for the
14 Financial Empowerment Initiative that are a number of
15 them in - most of them in OFE but also in our
16 marketing team and in our IT unit or division.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And a couple questions
18 specific to hotel licensing and a couple specific to
19 the FARE Act. So on hotel licensing, does the Prelim
20 plan include revenues that are associated with the
21 hotel licensing fees?

22 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: I just want to confirm the
23 information Council Member. Yeah, so the licensing
24 scheme right, so the hotels, there is about 700 in
25 the city and they will each need to get the license.

1
2 That lasts about two years and each time they get it,
3 it is \$350.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay.

5 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: That will be the revenue.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And have you been engaging
7 with stakeholders regarding the implementation of the
8 law and if so, what type of feedback are you
9 receiving?

10 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: So definitely being engaging
11 with them is sort of part of how we see the success
12 of anything that we do. Similarly as we engage with
13 you and other city council members when there's new
14 legislation to be proposed, once the bill has passed
15 and we're working on rule making, we always want to
16 make sure that we're talking to those who are going
17 to be impacted by the bill. So, yes, we've been
18 engaging with them through rule making, which we are
19 almost done with to share the - to publish those
20 rules and then obviously once they're published, we
21 will hold as a weapon or as another means to make
22 sure that the community is well informed on how we're
23 going to go about it and how they can access the
24 license. In terms of feedback, I'll have Assistant
25

1
2 Commissioner Ortiz share any particulars that we may
3 be able to share at this point.

4 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yeah, I think uhm, well we've been
5 actively engaging with industry and both on the
6 industry side and the new workers side. I think well
7 all their comments to our rules that we are
8 finalizing soon, they are available on our website so
9 not to put any words in anyone's mouth but I
10 generally think that a lot of the feedback was just
11 about clarity in terms of how we're going to develop
12 these licenses, how we're going to issue them, what
13 types of documentation we'll be looking for. I think
14 that's the kind of general feedback we got, so we're
15 always working to incorporate that. We want to be as
16 transparent as possible with our stakeholders and the
17 licensing situation, so we're hoping to finalize that
18 very soon.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And as you know, the law
20 requires that hotel operators equip all of their core
21 employees with a panic button and provide them with
22 training to recognize human trafficking. What type
23 of support is the agency giving to hotels to make
24 sure that this is being done? Like where are you in
25 terms of that process?

1
2 KENNY MINAYA: I mean as uhm I believe Assistance
3 Commissioner Ortiz referred to or the Commissioner
4 herself, we are holding at DCWP 101 once the rules
5 are finalized in April, before the May commencement
6 of the licensing scheme. We're going to take
7 questions before hand from stakeholders and hopefully
8 we can answer as many of them about this new scheme.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay. Question on fines.
10 So, in terms of overall fines, our data indicates
11 that the agency has collected nearly \$14 million in
12 fines for Fiscal Year 2024. Could you give a
13 breakdown in the types of categories of what types of
14 businesses were fined and do you anticipate a
15 reduction? I mean we did do the law last year to
16 reduce fines where there was no consumer harm in
17 certain categories. How do you feel that the spirit
18 of that law is being implemented?

19 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you Chair. Yes, so we
20 did collect, I think it's actually 15.2 in 2024 in
21 fines across both our worker protection and consumer
22 protection work as it relates to consumer protection,
23 always the number is our tobacco violations. I yield
24 the most amount that was at 4.7 million last year in
25 2024 and that was followed by or second hand

1
2 automobile dealerships and the e-cigarettes. Those
3 are like the main, the top three that in terms of the
4 amount of money through civil penalties that the
5 agency collects. And yes, definitely with the
6 violations that are curable because of the reform
7 that we've done. I'm going to try to get you the
8 number because I believe we have a number on what we
9 feel businesses have been able to save through that
10 but I think it's going good. You know I think it's
11 again, we definitely always want to follow an
12 education first approach anyway and our team,
13 especially the enforcement team when they go out
14 there definitely aware and trained of what are those
15 curable violations so that we can address them with
16 the businesses and I think that paired with programs
17 like our VAP to make sure that we go and we do a walk
18 through with our inspectors has been really helpful
19 to get the businesses to a good place in terms of
20 compliance.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Now in terms of -

22 CARLOS ORTIZ: I think we're able to pull the
23 number in terms of money saved on cures and that was
24 last year, it was about \$423,000 but I would also add
25 that the small business relief for Formax that we

1
2 worked on with the Council and with you of course,
3 they also incorporate a lot of zero dollar penalties
4 the first time around, which I think was very helpful
5 for folks in terms of it was essentially functioned
6 as a warning type system. So, that's not reflected
7 in that number necessarily but I think they work hand
8 and hand.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Great thank you. Now getting
10 back to tobacco and we talked about this at the top
11 of the hearing, the improvement in compliance which
12 is great to say is attributed to obviously increased
13 enforcement and educational effort. So, what
14 strategies specifically has the agency implemented
15 regarding education and improved compliance and do
16 you believe additional enforcement would improve this
17 data?

18 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Chair, yeah, tobacco is
19 definitely it's consistently the number one where we
20 get complaints and a high number of inspections that
21 we conduct and also where the amount of money that we
22 collect for the violations is definitely stay there.
23 I know that in 2024 we conducted over 27,000
24 inspections of tobacco and e-cigarette retailers
25 across the city and so we continue to encourage

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

individuals and of course all of you to let us know when you observe maybe a violation so that we can deploy our inspectors to make sure that they can check how many. I can also share that I know under my tenure we also shut down over 170 locations for unlicensed activity because that is also even higher violations in terms of the tobacco and e-cigarettes. Just the unlicensed activity versus those who may be licensed where we are aware of them obviously because we license them but we're always looking to proactively make sure that we are visiting all the businesses in a route for any inspector as they see it that they might not have been aware.

KENNY MINAYA: And I was just going to underscore like we really made a conscious decision to increase our ceilings and I think that hopefully aside from you know what the results are for those individual targets hopefully have not gotten effects to the entire community. That they realize that there is a real cost to prolong noncompliance.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you. So I want to move to restitution for workers. I know Council Member Brewer talked about paid sick leave and the importance of that. You recently announced that you

1
2 secured \$2.6 million in relief for workers from five
3 businesses, Burlington Coat Factory, Starbucks, which
4 I know we talked a lot about earlier in the year to
5 have it on the green hot topic and allow our caring
6 to resolve violations of the city's workplace laws.
7 So, given what is happening with the Trump
8 Administration, it is obviously going to be more
9 important than ever to ensure the most robust worker
10 protection enforcement for the agency. What can be
11 done to increase your efforts? What can be done to
12 increase you know any type of resources that you need
13 in that regard?

14 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: It helps if the mic is on
15 right. As you mentioned, yes we are constantly
16 trying to promote the cases and get the word out
17 about the cases. Like you said, last year only we
18 collected \$7.9 million in restitution for workers but
19 in the last four years since I've been Commissioner
20 there, we're actually at \$43 million. So, again yes,
21 it's bragging but it's bragging because we want New
22 Yorkers to believe that we are there for them and
23 that we will get results for them.

24 I think any worker that has you know been able to
25 take advantage of our services and our advocacy can

1
2 attest to the work that we do and so, we will
3 continue to do that. I think it is important to
4 continue the strong relationships we have with the
5 various groups that work with New Yorkers,
6 particularly those in any area or industry that
7 relates to work.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay can we just remove the
9 bag from the room? Thank you, that would be great.
10 Thank you so much. Thank you. Okay, to continue,
11 thank you. So to continue, you were saying?

12 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: I think that part of making
13 sure that we can do more for continue doing more for
14 workers particularly in light of the realities with
15 the federal government. To me it comes out to a lot
16 of the outreach and education to make sure that
17 individuals are aware. I think New Yorkers often
18 times, you know we are in government for a very long
19 time and we know the differences but I think for a
20 lot of individuals, we're not aware. Government is
21 government, it doesn't matter what level it is that
22 you're talking about. So, I will continue to stress
23 those relationships and outreach that we do to
24 educate our workers. Like last year, when we did our
25 day of action promoting our work and bill of rights,

1
2 I mean we were at different points throughout the
3 city where we were able to distribute the information
4 to 10,000 New Yorkers in just one day.

5 So, we are always going to want to make sure that
6 we're getting the word out and we get in front of
7 people, not just you know not just the document that
8 we put out and press releases and announcements
9 through social media but also the interaction. I
10 very much enjoy giving presentations about the
11 various rights and the work that we do so that people
12 just see the live person that is behind the work that
13 we're doing.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I think that's going to be so
15 important because I know for a lot of consumers who
16 are facing deceptive practices, fraud, they're going
17 to sometimes to the CFPB and with that, we're now
18 closed. We need to ensure then that people know that
19 they can come to you for so many of these important
20 consumer protection issues. Perhaps partnering more
21 with Council Member Offices but we can put
22 information in our newsletters, working closely with
23 the Community Boards to get that information out.
24 The people should know that you all are the front
25

1
2 line resource on all consumer protection issues, I
3 think would be incredibly value added.

4 KENNY MINAYA: Yeah, we would deeply appreciate
5 it and I think that's reflective of like my remarks
6 and response to Council Member Cabàn. Like, I think
7 we should all be working together as a city
8 government to get the word out to people on the
9 street.

10 CARLOS ORTIZ: And thank you Chair for offering
11 that as well. I think in the most immediate term,
12 you know I think we're planning another day of
13 action. This one focused on consumer protections for
14 immigrants on April 9th. I think we would love for
15 your office to join us. In general, we will have
16 another worker, a day of action for worker rights as
17 well in the early spring. And certainly between
18 memorial day and labor day, we always want to focus
19 worker rights education, canvassing's, going out and
20 seeing people meeting where they are to share this
21 important material. So, we would love to be
22 partnering with your offices on those events.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yeah, we would love to do
24 that. Now, I think you might have mentioned this
25 before but I just want to make sure we get this down.

1
2 How much in worker restitution have you been able to
3 recoup from employers since the passage of the Paid
4 Sick Leave Law and the FARE Workweek Law were
5 enacted? So, for both metrics would be great.

6 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Since the laws were passed?

7 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yes.

8 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Let me make sure. So, we
9 don't have the number from back like the ten years
10 for Paid Safe and Sick Leave Law and also for the uhm
11 for FARE Workweek but we can absolutely get it to you
12 Chair.

13 CARLOS ORTIZ: But we can uhm, I can give you
14 right now the past three calendar years for each law.
15 For Paid Safe and Sick Leave in 2022 \$6 million, 2023
16 \$3.1 million, \$2024 \$3.9 million. In FARE Workweek,
17 2022 \$16.9, 2023 \$8.3, and 2024 \$4 million.

18 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Okay and I do want to note
19 getting back to this issue of getting the word out
20 about all the great worker protection work that you
21 all are doing, so we have some data on outreach
22 events that is indicating that in calendar year 2024,
23 DCWP hosted 289 outreach events. These events
24 produced 2,519 complaints, which consisted of
25 complaints on Paid Sick Leave, FARE Workweek,

1
2 delivery worker issues and as a result of that 506
3 investigations were open.

4 In what ways could you do even more outreach,
5 given the atmosphere that we are now in with the
6 federal government and the Trump Administration?
7 What can be done to increase those outreach events?
8 Because there are obviously a key way that people
9 then come forward and do a complaint.

10 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Assistant Commissioner Ortiz
11 leads the team that's outreach but I do want to say
12 that for example I mean it's just - we love to get
13 bombarded with requests really to do presentations
14 because we know that different people receive the
15 information in different ways. I can tell you that I
16 recently attended an event also at Mixteca where
17 there were community members that are churches
18 ambassadors to share information with their neighbors
19 and I think those are very powerful ways to get the
20 information out because obviously we can say it but
21 it's always going to be more powerful when fellow
22 community members, neighbors share the data to the
23 extent that there's ideas that perhaps we haven't
24 explored. We want to make sure that we do those but
25 certainly we don't have any one particular channel

1
2 that we use and we will adjust and share the language
3 in a different way so that it makes sense and is well
4 received.

5 CARLOS ORTIZ: I would say that in general - or
6 I'd say on our outreach team, we have five
7 individuals. In general, our model is to build into
8 existing events that are happening in the community
9 with court organizations such as Mixteca for example
10 or others, plug into where they are and talk about
11 the work that we do. On average when we're fully
12 staffed, we're hitting about 620 total events
13 throughout a year and I think that work is going to
14 continue if not increase as well.

15 Something that we recently implemented certainly
16 in the hiring process is as we become fully staffed
17 on that team is a highly preferred second language
18 capacity. And now, every single person on our
19 outreach team speaks a second, sometimes a third
20 language. We cover Spanish, Bangla, Cantonese,
21 Mandarin and Haitian Creole and that I think is to
22 your question Chair, is another way that we can build
23 trust, access these communities through language
24 access. So, the work never stops. I think it's a
25

1
2 constant effort to figure out new ways to engage
3 broadly but also in depth.

4 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: One more thing. We also do -
5 like enjoy doing roundtables. So, to the extent that
6 that's you know helpful it's good for us to bring
7 certain groups together so that they can hear
8 together what we're doing but also each other. So,
9 we recently did one specifically to consumer
10 protection and we are about to be convening other - a
11 number of groups to specifically talk about
12 immigrants, immigration service providers and that
13 type of issue because we know it's very, very much an
14 active area right now.

15 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, great. Well, thank you
16 so much. That concludes the questions we have. We
17 really appreciate it. Thank you so much. Thank you.

18 Okay, okay I am now going to open the hearing for
19 public testimony, so I want to remind members of the
20 public that this is a formal government proceeding
21 and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As
22 such, members of the public shall remain silent at
23 all times. The witness table is reserved for people
24 who wish to testify. No video recording or
25 photography is allowed from the witness table.

1
2 Further, members of the public may not present audio
3 or video recordings as testimony but they may submit
4 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant at
5 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record. If you
6 wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an
7 appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and wait to
8 be recognized. When recognized, you'll have two
9 minutes to speak on today's hearing topic preliminary
10 budget.

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

18 So, I'm now going to call the first panel, if you
19 can make your way up when you hear your name Mimi
20 Whittaker, Ben Fuller-Googins, Winston Berkman-Breen.
21 If you could all please come up. Okay please begin,
22 thank you. Push the red button, yes.

23 WINSTON BERKMAN-BREEN: Alright, thank you
24 Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is
25 Winston Berkman-Breen and I am the Legal Director at

2 the Student Borrower Protection Center, a national
3 nonprofit advocacy litigation and research group
4 focused on ending the student debt burden in New York
5 and across the country.

6 Our work focuses on all consumer and financial
7 practices facing students and workers, including loan
8 origination, service and debt collection. Prior to
9 the SBPC, I was a legal services attorney here in New
10 York City and a state financial regulator for New
11 York.

12 At SBPC, we regularly work with federal state and
13 local regulators and consumer protection agencies.
14 The New York City DCWP is consistently one of the
15 most proactive, sophisticated, and committed of our
16 partners nationwide. I'll submit written testimony
17 about the agencies many accomplishments and the
18 concrete ways in which it keeps dollars in New
19 Yorkers pockets and protects citizens and workers.
20 It does this through examination of licensees,
21 investigations enforcement of consumer protection
22 laws against bad actors and coordinating a network of
23 direct service providers of which I used to be one at
24 NYLAG, who actually sit down with New Yorkers and
25 help them with their issues.

1
2 Today, I want to focus on the extraordinary
3 moment we're in and the need for New Yorkers to have
4 a strong DCWP. Our consumer protection at the
5 federal level are actively being dismantled. The
6 Federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has
7 been shuttered. The Department of Education which
8 administers federal student loans had half its
9 workforce fires last week including the entire office
10 of the Ombuds person.

11 New Yorkers need someone to look out for them.
12 According to the CFPB Public Consumer Complaint
13 database, in 2024, New York City residents filed
14 108,099 complaints with the agency. That's up from
15 44,669 in 2023. That's a 142 percent. In 2022, they
16 files 26,785. So, that's roughly 27,000 to 45,000
17 jumping to 108,000. Clearly there is a growing need
18 to protect New Yorkers which coincides with the
19 federal fallback. So, I would just say we heard a
20 lot about - my time is up - budgets and vacancies.
21 Just give them the money they need. This is a
22 question of bandwidth. We know they have a good
23 track record and this is not a time to cut corners.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.
25

1
2 BEN FULLER-GOOGINS: Thank you. Thank you Chair
3 Menin and Council Members on the Committee for
4 letting me speak today. My name is Ben Fuller-
5 Googins. I'm the Executive Director with Carroll
6 Gardens Association. We're a member of the New York
7 City Coalition for domestic work. One of six
8 organizations that's committing to ensure that the
9 200,000 domestic workers across our city are
10 treated with dignity and respect and know their
11 rights.

12 Just a little background about domestic workers.
13 These are the nannies, housecleaners and home care
14 attendants that take care of our loved ones across
15 our city and our homes. However, despite this
16 essential work they do, they're often treated with
17 abuse over time. Not getting paid overtime, wage
18 theft. Often this is due to because of historic
19 exclusion from a lot of labor laws that other workers
20 enjoy.

21 So, you heard earlier from the Commissioner that
22 allying with groups like us and coalitions are really
23 essential to outreach to domestic workers and workers
24 across our city. Particularly domestic workers, you
25 know these are workers who are an individual

1
2 household and make it very difficult to identify
3 where workers are. And so, we've had over the years
4 very successful outreach efforts with the department,
5 going to libraries and parks, meeting workers where
6 they're at to ensure they know their rights giving
7 them information in languages across this really
8 diverse workforce.

9 So, I'm here today to just echo the need to
10 support this - the \$77 million budget ask. This will
11 allow them to hire additional attorneys and
12 investigators like you heard. Really essential to
13 reach this workforce. I also wanted to include our
14 FY26 ask for the coalition, which is \$800,000. You
15 all have historically supported our initiative and
16 so, we're also asking for an increase for our
17 initiative to conduct outreach and education across
18 all five boroughs and languages to domestic workers.
19 So, thank you for your time and look forward to
20 continue working together.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. Okay.

22 MIMI WHITTAKER: Okay thank you Chair Menin and
23 members of the Committee. There we go. Okay thank
24 you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is
25 Mimi Whittaker, I'm a Lawyer with the National

1
2 Employment Law Project, NELP. The National nonprofit
3 with more than 55 years of experience advocating for
4 the labor and employment rights of low wage workers.
5 And I'm here to testify in support of adequate
6 funding for DCWP to support its enforcement
7 capabilities.

8 So first, DCWP holds a critical role in
9 protecting workers, despite being one of the smallest
10 city agencies, they are a leader on workplace policy
11 and they enforce several unique protections for New
12 York City workers and because many of these laws
13 don't care private right of action, workers must go
14 to DCWP in order to make sure that their protections
15 are enforced.

16 Secondly, I wanted to emphasize that New York
17 City is doing a great job in significantly increasing
18 worker protections but it needs to also extend the
19 resources to make sure that they are enforced.
20 Currently the City Council is considering several new
21 bills that will offer significant wins for workers
22 and together the financial impact statements for
23 these bills indicate that DCWP would require an
24 additional \$2.5 million in their budget. A robust
25

1
2 DCWP is critical to ensure that New York's strong
3 workplace protections are effective.

4 And lastly, which is a bit of a theme today, I
5 wanted to emphasize the federal efforts to dismantle
6 federal worker and consumer protection agencies which
7 make DCWP's role more critical than ever. The Trump
8 Administration is gutting these agencies of their
9 staff and enforcement powers, meaning that
10 unscrupulous employers will feel emboldened to
11 disregard worker rights. Furthermore the federal
12 governments increased immigration enforcement at work
13 places will have a chilling effect on workers, which
14 makes all workers regardless of their immigration
15 status vulnerable to workplace abuses. And given
16 that that's my time, we'd like to respectfully urge
17 that you fund the DCWP. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Great, thank you very much
19 for your testimony today. Question.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I just want - Paid Sick
21 Days does have private right of action. I assume you
22 know that.

23 MIMI WHITTAKER: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And then one quick, for
25 the domestic workers whom I am familiar with for

1
2 about 30 years. My question would be what would be a
3 specific example as to what the agency could do to be
4 cognizant of their rights. Obviously Paid Sick days,
5 overtime, I just want to know if you could provide
6 some of that list?

7 BEN FULLER-GOOGINS: In terms of making sure the
8 agency is aware of -

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes.

10 BEN FULLER-GOOGINS: Well, they're very
11 collaborative, so we work very closely to ensure that
12 the materials that they develop are actually coming
13 from workers themselves to make sure they're
14 culturally linguistic accessible and really outlining
15 what's in the domestic worker bill of rights and
16 including some of the city initiatives too, so yeah
17 we've had a lot of success with the joint outreach
18 that I mentioned to ensure that workers are
19 understanding that. You know the city has their back
20 in terms of enforcement.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay thank you very much for
23 your testimony, we appreciate it. I'm now going to
24 call the next panel Gene Harriott-English, Jeehae -
25 sorry, it's a little hard to read the handwriting on

1 this Ronowski (SP?) okay, and Sergei Rounovski (SP?).

2 Thank you. Okay, please begin, thank you.

3
4 SERGEI ROUNOVSKI: Hello guys my name is Sergei
5 Rounovski and I am a street vendor since 1995 and a
6 member of Street Vendor Project, and I believe
7 increasing of the number of the license will generate
8 some profit for the city and also allow 20,000 street
9 vendors to meet the ends which they cannot do it
10 right now. There's not too much vendors make enough
11 money to support the families.

12 So, I'm asking you to please give us a hearing so
13 at the Street Vendor Project reform package can be
14 moved forward and I'm going to use the remainder of
15 my time to read from the general vendor, merchandise
16 vendor waiting list, which I see is over 20,000
17 people.

18 So, it's not uhm, it's READING NAMES [01:41:16] -
19 [01:41:44] and many and other ones.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay thank you very much.

21 SERGEI ROUNOVSKI: Thank you.

22 JEEHAE RONOWSKI: Hello, thank you Chairman and
23 Committee Members for letting us speak. My name is
24 Jeehae Ronowski and I've been working as a street
25 vendor along with my husband since 1996. My fellow

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

street vendors are some of the courteous and hardest working New Yorkers. Thousands of them are waiting for license to be authorized to continue to work. Please create a path forward for us and increasing the number of licenses by giving us a hearing on the Street Vendor Reform Package. I'm going to use the remainder of my time to read from the general merchandise vendor waitlist. READING NAMES [01:42:25]- [01:43:51]. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

GENE HARRIOTT-ENGLISH: Pleasant good afternoon Council Members and everyone here. My name is Gene Harriott-English and I'm representing the Street Vendors in Brooklyn New York and our joining streets in zip code 11208. I'm here today to ask for - as everybody else here is asking, for a release of the street vendors license. So, because we are being arrest, we have four days a week on the street selling stuff and we are being arrest by the police and the sanitation. They're taking our stuff away and confiscating them and this is very hard for us vendors and our families and our livelihood. We desperately are asking and pleading to all Council Members for your assistance and looking in the matter

1
2 of the license. We are suffering immensely and
3 begging, please, please, for your assistance. Now
4 that the weather is changing, it's time when we come
5 out to try and make a living for our families.

6 So, this is asking again for your mercy to help
7 us to get the license going that we can pay our fees
8 and get on with our livelihoods. I don't really have
9 a list of the members but it is very, very important
10 that you, if you could pay us a little more attention
11 to opening up the license for us and that's all I
12 have to ask. Thank you so much for allowing us to
13 speak today.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much for all
15 of your testimony.

16 PANEL: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I'm now going to read the
18 next panel and that is Judith Rodino and I believe
19 the note is that we need a Translator please. Yes.
20 Yes, Spanish please. Elia Zois Campos (SP?), Ysabel
21 Rosario and also Translator.

22 Are we getting a translator? Oh great,
23 wonderful, thank you so much. Thank you. Oh
24 terrific thank you. Okay thanks okay please begin,
25 thank you.

JUDITH RODINO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

[01:47:10]- [01:48:09].

TRANSLATOR: One, two, three, okay. My name is Judith Rodino. I'm a mother of three children. I'm a survivor of domestic violence and I am a Street Vendor since 2010. Given that today the topic brought to the table is the negotiation for the budget, I would like to say that I want to make a request. I want the protection of street vendors to be taken into account and I want the street sales to be legalized and I've been actually in a waitlist ever since 2010 as well and we are about 20,000 vendors. If street vending is legalized, this will bring money for the government and I have another request. Please let us have a hearing so we can be here with dignity and respect.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate and to testify to all of the Council Members and I also want to say that the irregularity that we're facing as street vendors needs to end and we demand the licensing and protection because we don't want to cause any harm to anyone but we want to be here in a dignified way.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

1
2 JUDITH RODINO: I have a list, the waiting list
3 for my coworkers READING NAMES [01:50:16]-
4 [01:51:05].

5 TRANSLATOR: That's a list of names that she has
6 with her coworkers.

7 ELIAZAR CAMPOS: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
8 [01:51:23]- [01:53:26].

9 TRANSLATOR: My name is Eliazar Campos, I'm
10 asking that for street vendors and the overall people
11 that are actually street vendors, that please do help
12 us. We've all have been lost and everything that has
13 to be done for us to have something worth - and to
14 have something worthy and to help us with the
15 different requests that every single member has.

16 I am a Street Vendor. I've been a Street Vendor
17 for 18 years and now we want something safe and
18 worthy for the street vendors that we also have
19 rights and we pay all of our taxes. We are
20 essential. We also fight day to day, thanks to the
21 excellency of the street vendors. We want to be seen
22 as INAUDIBLE [01:54:53] and we want the street
23 vendors reform to be here and have a place.

24 We all have different nationalities and actually
25 some vendors are not capable of selling or having

1
2 sales. They are afraid. They do not sell. They
3 don't have sales and they don't have enough money to
4 pay rent. So, we adamantly ask you to give us what
5 we deserve because we do pay taxes every trimester or
6 quarterly and we don't have rights because we follow
7 the laws but we don't have rights as well. We need
8 the permits, we need the licenses and even if we have
9 to pay for the fees or if we have to dually pertain
10 in paperwork, we will but all of us need the
11 necessary permits and licenses to be able to do all
12 that.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you very much.

14 ELIAZAR CAMPOS: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

15 [01:56:02]- [01:56:04].

16 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yes and if she wants to
17 submit the written testimony, we would take - if
18 there's any written testimony that you'd like to
19 submit.

20 TRANSLATOR: Okay. SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

21 [01:56:13]- [01:56:21].

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, we can take the written
23 testimony. Great, thank you so much. Thank you.
24 Thank you very much, thank you. Okay, I'm going to
25 call the next panel and that is Jose Yos, Ligia

1
2 Guallpa, Luis Cortes, if you could please come down.
3 Thank you. Okay, okay, great thank you. Okay thank
4 you, please begin.

5 TRANSLATOR: [01:57:26]- [01:57:27].

6 JOSE YOS: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE [01:57:28]-
7 [02:00:16].

8 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon. My name is Jose Yos
9 and I am a member of the Workers Justice Project and
10 a deliverista or delivery person and leader of Lost
11 Deliveristas Amigos for United Delivery Workforce.
12 That's in English. As a worker, I am very proud to
13 offer a service to the community but as a worker, I
14 have also faced many difficult situations in recent
15 years.

16 I have been to a group of vulnerable workers who
17 feel of use, exploited and we don't have rights by a
18 group of full delivery companies that have refused to
19 recognize us as workers. Because of our work, we
20 also have to endure injustices like wage theft, of
21 which I have been a victim. This was mainly with the
22 company Door Dash, which withheld my wages leading to
23 a cascade of negative consequences for my family. It
24 was on the streets that I met a Workers Justice
25 Project organization. Its leaders and organizers who

1
2 inform me of my rights and how I could help transform
3 the industry by denouncing this injustices. They
4 also helped me file my first wage theft complaint
5 with the Department of Consumer and Worker
6 Protection, DCWP. Where we, a group of workers,
7 demanded a payment that has been indefinitely
8 withheld by this company and where it was able to
9 recover what had been taken from me.

10 Today, as a worker, I realize that local
11 government agencies and community organizations are
12 essential to ensuring our rights are of help. The
13 current realities that neither did DCWP nor WJP have
14 the sufficient funding to provide all the necessary
15 supports for cases of our use and without this
16 funding that protect us as deliveristas and are
17 meaningless. Our fight is focused on more
18 protections but if we have an agency that doesn't
19 have to the capacity to enforce these protections,
20 the ones who will be effected are the thousands of
21 workers who will have nowhere to turn in their most
22 critical moment.

23 I want to thank the Members of this Committee for
24 listening to me and for recognizing that the
25 workforce is and will continue to be essential for

1
2 keeping New York City moving, creating [INAUDIBLE
3 02:03:07], equity and [INAUDIBLE 02:03:09]. Thank
4 you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

6 LIGIA GUALLPA: Thank you so much. Thank you
7 Chairwoman Julia Menin and Council Member Gale for
8 the opportunity to testify today. So, my name is
9 Ligia Guallpa, I work with the Workers Justice
10 Project and I'm here today to share a little bit of
11 also what we have been able to accomplish thanks to
12 the City Council's funding support this past eight
13 months or actually over the past year too.

14 So, we have been in the frontline supporting
15 about 8,000 low wage workers, like day laborers,
16 domestic workers, and delivery workers by providing
17 access to workers' rights, case management support,
18 labor rights education, workforce development
19 trainings and other critical services.

20 In the past nine months, we have been able to
21 achieve key milestones and I'm just going to name a
22 few of them. One is empowering workers through case
23 management, which led to a major labor investigation
24 by the Attorney General Office and recovered \$16.75
25 million in the stolen tips for Door Dash workers.

1
2 So, right now, this next six months is going to be
3 about outreaching to make sure those workers can come
4 forward. We also have been partnering with the
5 agency, DCWP to investigate Door Dash for wage theft
6 and which we have been able to accomplish in
7 recovering close to \$40,000 in stolen wages. We have
8 helped register 225 app delivery workers for the most
9 recently launched E-Bike Trade program with DOT. We
10 have provided workforce development training, also
11 assistance with training and case management to 230
12 deliveristas as well. Also, assist nearly 100
13 workers to get some sort of different action on
14 immigration protections and train over 800 workers in
15 construction site safety training and connecting jobs
16 that has generated over \$1 million in income for
17 their families.

18 And these are just examples of what Workers
19 Justice has been able to accomplish with DCWP. I
20 mean with the city funding support and I'll end
21 there. I'm here once again just seeking support for
22 key essential initiatives like the Day Labor
23 Workforce Initiatives, which has - many of us have
24 been depending on, the construction site safety, low
25 wage worker initiative and ask for \$2 million as well

1
2 for DCWP, which has been an incredible partner that
3 we rely on and we continue to have their support,
4 especially now more than ever. Thank you.

5 LUIS CORTES: Good afternoon. Thank you Council
6 Member Menin. My name is Luis Cortes and I am the
7 Director of Lost Deliveristas Amigos at the Workers
8 Justice Project. Today, I want to mention the
9 valuable contributions made by DCWP agency with whom
10 we have worked together to achieve significant
11 benefits in our community. As the staff of WJP, I
12 have seen all the injustice committed by delivery
13 companies that have used technology strategies to
14 exploit our way of working, forcing delivery workers
15 to work long hours, paying low wages, deactivating
16 accounts, making it difficult for customer to tip or
17 withholding wages that we all already earn.

18 If these abuses have been reported to DCWP where
19 we have announced how companies have deliberately
20 withheld wages from many delivery workers in New York
21 City. This work has been extensive. We have
22 reported workers who have suffered from these abuses
23 and thanks to the support and assistance of this
24 agency, we have recovered thousands of dollars. Our
25 organization is fighting on expanding local

1
2 protection for delivery workers and DCWP will be the
3 agency making app companies accountable. These
4 protections are paid transparency, option to tipping
5 before the order is placed and deactivation
6 protection, increasing DCWP while creating structure
7 to make these rules a reality, especially in these
8 critical moments when the new administration is
9 directly attacking the working class.

10 Today, I want to thank the members of the City
11 Council and DCWP agency for always advocating for
12 these vulnerable individuals and with their support
13 and resources we will be able to provide hundreds of
14 workers with essential resources in our workplace,
15 offering safety empowerment, leadership, and the
16 recognition that collective powers are stronger than
17 any multimillion dollar company. Thank you very
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much for your
20 testimony. I'm going to call the next panel, Ariel
21 Mintz, Mahmoud Zaed, Ashley Chen, if you could please
22 come forward. Thank you. Okay, please begin, thank
23 you.

24 MAHMOUD ZAED: First I wanted to thank everyone
25 for giving me a chance to speak up today and my name

1
2 is Zaed and I work in the upper east side and I have
3 been a food vendor since 2008, which is almost 17
4 years now. I'm also a member of Street Vendor
5 Project. My business actually providing a service to
6 the community and we create jobs pay lots of taxes to
7 New York City. We are dealing with a very old system
8 and I can't have my own permit. I'm still on the
9 waitlist for so many years. I don't know if I'm
10 going to be alive when I'm going to have my permit or
11 not.

12 Okay, I'm renting a permit from an underground
13 market and this is actually bring impact on my
14 business and also to the local economy. We need a
15 vending system that works for me and for everybody
16 else who wants to have a food vendor permit.

17 I request that this Committee hold a hearing on
18 Intro. 431 so we can have a license or our own permit
19 without run after people who already have the permit
20 and rent it for other people. I want to share some
21 of the names with you that has been waiting for so
22 many years to get their permits and so far they
23 haven't gotten it yet. READING NAMES [02:10:25]-
24 [02:10:32] alright, thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you very much and
3 if you want to submit the names, we're happy to take
4 that. Thank you.

5 MAHMOUD ZAED: You're welcome.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay.

7 ASHLEY CHEN: Thank you Chair Menin and Members
8 of the Consumer Worker Protections Committee for the
9 opportunity to testify today. My name is Ashley Chen
10 and I'm a Policy Analyst at the Chinese American
11 Planning Council, CPC. We're the nations largest
12 Asian American social service organization. In New
13 York City, approximately one in seven workers have
14 been fired or disciplined for simply speaking out
15 about workplace concerns. On top of this, many
16 immigrant workers in our community live in constant
17 fear of going to work due to the threat of ICE
18 Enforcement and deportations, which have been openly
19 threatened by the federal administration.

20 At CPC, we have been conducting know your rights
21 trainings to empower our community, especially
22 immigrant workers with the knowledge to protect
23 themselves from ICE raids in their work places.
24 However, despite our efforts, more is needed to
25 address this pressing issue. That's why I'm here

1
2 today to strongly urge \$77 million in funding for the
3 Department of Consumer and Worker Protections in the
4 Fiscal Year 2026 Budget. An increase of \$2 million
5 over the preliminary proposal.

6 We are requesting that the \$2 million allocation
7 be used to hire seven attorney's, five data
8 scientists, four investigators and one outreach
9 person. Given the ongoing attack on worker
10 protections by the federal government, our city has
11 become the first line of defense against harmful
12 policies. The Trump Administrations unlawful and
13 unprecedented assaults on workers as well as the
14 systematic undermining of agencies meant to safeguard
15 them, have created a significant vacuum.

16 This makes state and local enforcement more
17 critical than ever. DCWP plays a pivotal role
18 investigating, adjudicating and prosecuting labor and
19 employment violations including issues like wage
20 theft, unpaid sick leave and discrimination.
21 However, with federal agencies such as the NRB and
22 EOC either underfunded or actively obstructed, the
23 current funding levels for the city agencies are
24 simply insufficient to safeguard the rights of New
25 York City workers.

2 Now more than ever our workers deserve strong
3 agencies that will protect the rights against federal
4 neglect and hostility. To ensure that every worker
5 in our city has the support that they need, it is
6 absolutely essential that the city appropriates \$77
7 million for DCWP to expand resources for the agency.
8 Thank you for your time.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.

10 ARIEL MINTZ: Hello, my name is Ariel Mintz.
11 Thank you so much Council Members for your time today
12 and thank you to Council Member Gale Brewer. I've
13 lived on the Borough side my entire life and it's an
14 amazing place to live and we appreciate your service
15 to the community.

16 I'm here today with the Street Vendor Program.
17 I'm trying to start my own business in New York City
18 and I thought it would be a really interesting idea
19 to try to find customers on the street. I did a
20 little bit of research into this and found out that
21 it wasn't possible and there was no system to allow
22 for vendors and people like myself trying to start a
23 small business to sell to people on the streets of
24 New York City.

1
2 I'd love to have the opportunity to do so and I'd
3 love to have the opportunity to create a business
4 here in the city and thank you so much for your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much. Okay,
6 thank you to this panel. I'm now going to call the
7 next panel Mohamed Attia and Monssa Ibrahim and I
8 believe we need a Translator, Arabic, yes thank you.

9 Okay, great please begin.

10 MONSSA IBRAHIM: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
11 [02:14:59]- [02:16:14].

12 TRANSLATOR: Good evening, my name is Monssa
13 Ibrahim. I work as a Street Vendor. I have been
14 facing discrimination from the NYPD for a violation
15 that uhm not [INAUDIBLE 02:16:30] or anything. They
16 don't even take any measurement. They sit in their
17 vans and their cars. They just take the permit
18 number; they added it to the violation that needs to
19 be there. They do not allow us to defend ourselves
20 or speak to any one of them. That was my first
21 problem that I faced as a city vendor in New York
22 City streets.

23 My second issue and permit that we face is
24 issuing permits. We have been trying to leave these
25 jobs and try to find other jobs but there is no jobs

1
2 for us or if there is anything else to do, we have
3 been requested to have like a permit. Issue new
4 permits for us, that's all we need. Some protection
5 for the city's vendors. Thank you and thanks for
6 giving me the opportunity to speak.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

8 MOHAMED ATTIA: Good afternoon Chair Menin and
9 Council Member Brewer. My name is Mohamed Attia, I'm
10 the Managing Director of the Street Vendor Project.
11 I want to talk briefly about SVP. We provide legal
12 representation and small business support to hundreds
13 of street vendors across the city. We respectfully
14 request that the Council considers our funding
15 applications for this Fiscal Year to ensure that we
16 do our best to meet the demand that is increasing.

17 For decades street vendors in New York City have
18 been dealing with an unfair system that is no
19 licenses, only tickets, fines and arrests. Vendors
20 want to follow the rules but the city is not allowing
21 them to do so. However, vendors are being penalized
22 for the governments failures to regulate the street
23 vending industry. Vendors are so disappointed that
24 the city government hasn't stepped up in the most
25

1
2 horrific times in recent history while immigrants are
3 under constant attack.

4 As an immigrant myself and a former vendor, I
5 know first hand the risk and fear that vendors take
6 every day going out to work facing various
7 enforcement agencies who treat them as criminals.
8 With the increased enforcement and criminal tickets
9 issued to vendors, they are becoming more vulnerable
10 to getting in contact with ICE and face serious
11 consequences.

12 Last year alone, the police issued more than
13 2,000 criminal tickets to street vendors. New York
14 City has the opportunity to provide protection to our
15 communities by passing the Street Vendor Reform
16 Package, you pretty much know the numbers of the
17 bills. The most crucial piece here is the - and the
18 reform is ensuring that the vendors have access to
19 the business licenses. By passing Intro. 431, the
20 city will create thousands of licenses and permits
21 desperately needed to formalize the vending industry
22 and you can see how many millions would be generated
23 into the local economy and the city's budget. I
24 provided that in the IBO report attached to my
25 testimony.

1
2 And since we're here before this Committee, we
3 hope that the Committee will schedule a hearing on
4 this very important bill, Intro. 431. A conversation
5 that has been going on for more than a decade but
6 yet, everyone is trying to avoid it. The vendors now
7 don't need sympathetic speeches. They really need
8 actions, reforms and protections. Only the City
9 Council has the authority to do that, not the
10 Administration, not the federal government, only the
11 City Council but yet it hasn't done anything about
12 it. We are looking forward to working with you in
13 the near future to ensure that New York City is a
14 safe place for the vendors community. Thank you so
15 much.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. One quick
17 question I have is can you comment on any thoughts on
18 the prior City Council legislation from the Council
19 before our time in terms of an increased number of
20 permits, and what impact that had? If you could
21 comment on that, that would be helpful.

22 MOHAMED ATTIA: Sure, thank you Chairman for the
23 question. So, back in 2021, the City Council passed
24 Intro. 1116 which became Local Law 18 that requires
25 the city to make 445 applications for permits

1
2 available every single year. However, as of May last
3 year, we have seen that the Health Department
4 released almost 2,000 of these applications, not only
5 the ones required by the law but others that lapse
6 back from the old system and according to the numbers
7 they shared with us in the Street Vendor Advisory
8 Board, the uptick of these applications has been
9 roughly 30 percent, only 30 percent. 528 vendors
10 actually obtained that new supervisory licenses and
11 just to be very honest and put that on the record,
12 there is nothing that we can blame the Health
13 Department for. The Health Department is doing their
14 job. They are sending out the applications. The
15 vendors who are interested in the new system are
16 applying. However, as my colleagues earlier shared,
17 there is an extremely long waiting list that is
18 moving extremely slowly. Everyone thought the Local
19 Law 18 is the end all be all. That cannot be further
20 from the truth.

21 The truth is, we have more than 10,000 names on
22 the waiting list even at the end of the full
23 implementation of this Local Law, which would be by
24 2032, we don't have enough licenses for everyone and
25 there are thousands of people who want to be vendors

1
2 in a legal way. Who want to obtain the license?
3 They're not even on this waiting list. So, the
4 waiting list is not everyone. The waiting list is
5 only 10,000 people, there are thousands of others who
6 are not on the map. They don't have a chance in the
7 next decade to receive a license under the new local
8 law.

9 So, what we're trying to do here is to find a
10 practical way to ensure that the waiting list is
11 moving forward quickly. That people are being
12 offered the change and for those who are not
13 interested, they will lose it. They will miss the
14 chance. They will lose and that's fine but we can go
15 over the waiting list quickly. We can go to the next
16 person because some folks and some of our members,
17 folks who testified today, their waiting list number
18 is 3,000. That means that they will need to wait ten
19 more years likely or they will just need thousands of
20 people who hold these permits to die for them to get
21 a change to obtain the license.

22 So, it's kind of like the whole system is set up
23 in a way that is failing the vendors and failing the
24 city and we cannot really be pointing fingers. I
25 cannot point fingers at the Health Department and

1
2 say, they are not doing their job. They are sending
3 the applications. I get the applications. I'm on
4 the waiting list. I still have my food vendor
5 license, it's active. I do get the applications, so
6 thank you Health Department, you are doing your job.
7 Now everyone is looking at the Council. The Council
8 needs to have an Admin Code that is working. Pretty
9 much of the same thing for the general merchandise
10 vendors. A lot of people ignore the fact that the
11 merchandise licenses haven't been touched since 1979.
12 That is 46 years. 46 years with the same number of
13 licenses. We heard from the Sanitation Inspectors.
14 They go at the vendors and be very aggressive,
15 yelling at the vendors, telling them go get a
16 license. You should get a license. Why are you not
17 getting a license?

18 We even heard the elected officials who are going
19 to the press and saying, these vendors, if you want
20 to like operate in the city, they should go get a
21 license. We went to the DCWP office at 42 Broadway,
22 the licensing center. The Deputy Commissioner met us
23 at the door. Having the Amin go print it out and she
24 says, you cannot get a license, I'm sorry. The
25 waiting list is closed, I'm sorry. Unless you are a

1
2 military veteran, there is no way for you to obtain a
3 license. Even the waiting list is the unknown. We
4 ask her how long should we wait? Can we come back
5 next year? Can we come back in ten years? She said
6 I have no idea. We have more than 9,000 names left
7 on the waiting list and the only time the waiting
8 list moves is by someone who holds a license dies or
9 stop renewing their license for whatever reason for
10 DCWP to call the next person on the waiting list.

11 So, you can only imagine of the 853 licenses are
12 being circulated, even every ten years it would take
13 likely 100 years for this waiting list to be over.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay.

15 MOHAMED ATTIA: I hope that answers your
16 question.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yes, thank you very much.
18 Thank you. I will call the next panel, Clotilde,
19 Rosario Troncodo(SP?), oh it's Ysabel Rosario, we
20 called Ysabel before but okay great thank you.
21 Please come forward.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Go ahead.

23 ROSARIO TRONCODO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

24 [02:25:25]- [02:26:31]

1
2 TRANSLATOR: My name is Rosario. First of all,
3 thank you for the opportunity to participate and be
4 heard. My name is Rosario. I am a Street Vendor
5 since 2020 and because of the pandemic, I started but
6 I lost my job because of the pandemic and that's when
7 I started selling in the streets. I didn't know
8 about the new rules or about street vending but
9 thanks to SVP, I learned about those rules.

10 In addition I noticed or realized about the need
11 to have permits and licenses to not be chased by the
12 police or sanitation and that's why I ask you to
13 please offer us a hearing for the proposal of law
14 431. I think that the city would receive more taxes
15 from street vendors and they would have more control
16 over the street vendors. Thank you for your time and
17 for hearing us. And now the list.

18 ROSARIO TRONCODO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
19 [02:27:38]- [02:29:09].

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Gracias.

21 YSABEL ROSARIO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
22 [02:29:16]- [02:30:06].

23 TRANSLATOR: Hello, my name Ysabel Rosario and I
24 am a member of the SVP. First of all thank you very
25 much for receiving us and for listening to us in this

1
2 hearing about budgeting. I am here to demand a
3 hearing where you please can hear us and as well as
4 everyone else so that we can advance with the bill
5 431. This law will provide justice for us and create
6 a system of street vending that will work for
7 everyone. Again, thank you very much Council Member
8 Menin.

9 CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

10 [02:30:42]-[02:30:45].

11 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon. Thank you very much
12 to the Council.

13 CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

14 [02:30:50] - [02:30:53].

15 TRANSLATOR: As you have seen, the system is
16 broken.

17 CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE [02:30:56]

18 - [02:31:06].

19 TRANSLATOR: There is no place for someone who
20 needs to -

21 CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

22 [02:31:08]- [02:31:12].

23 TRANSLATOR: There is no place where somebody who
24 is willing to go and sell can find some research like
25 education and we are living in the first world.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
[02:31:20]- [02:31:21].

TRANSLATOR: I'm also a single mom.

CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
[02:31:23]- [02:31:24].

TRANSLATOR: Of three minors.

CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
[02:31:25]- [02:31:31].

TRANSLATOR: And every week I have to make the decision if I save enough for my children's food or to pay the rent.

CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
[02:31:37]- [02:31:41].

TRANSLATOR: We need a hearing for the 31-

CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
[02:31:42]- [02:31:49].

TRANSLATOR: So that you can please include street vendors and not continue excluding us.

CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
[02:31:57]- [02:31:59]

TRANSLATOR: Because we move local economy.

CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
[02:32:02].

TRANSLATOR: In our city.

CLEOTILDE: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:32:05].

TRANSLATOR: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you.

CLEOTILDE: Gracias.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much. Okay, we're now going to turn to Zoom. I'm going to call the first panel Zade Haobsh, Salua Baida, Tito Sinha, and Jorge Rosero.

ZADE HAOBSH: Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Department of Consumer and Worker Protection. I'm the Office of Financial Empowerment. My name is Zade and I serve as the program director for Grow Brooklyn's free tax prep program. Based in Brooklyn, we encompass both traditional IRS volunteer income tax assistance services for individuals and families as well as specialized tax preparation services for self-employed workers, small business owners and gig workers, all under DCWP's NYC free tax prep vendor.

The complexity of our tax code creates significant barriers for low to middle income New Yorkers. For self-employed individuals like freelancers, gig workers, childcare providers, and

1
2 small business owners, these challenges are even more
3 pronounced. Facing confusing requirements around
4 quarterly estimated payments, self-employed taxes,
5 proper record keeping, often without access to
6 professional affordable guidance.

7 The Department of Consumer and Worker Protection
8 has been an important ally in our mission through
9 financial support, technical assistance and
10 collaborative outreach efforts. DCWP has helped us
11 expand our geographic reach to serve more Brooklyn
12 neighborhoods, offer multilingual tax preparation
13 services to immigrant communities, many of whom
14 you've heard the testimony before me, develop
15 specialized expertise for self employed filers and
16 provide a year around presence for tax education
17 resources and additional services.

18 DCWP's commitment to consumer protection
19 perfectly aligns with our goal of ensuring that cost
20 is not a barrier for providing every New Yorker
21 access to high quality -

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

23 ZADE HAOSHS: In closing, I want to emphasize
24 that the partnership between DCWP and Grow Brooklyn
25 represents government at its best. Responding to

1
2 community needs through strategic collaboration and
3 delivering direct action.

4 By investing in these services -

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I'm just going to ask you to
6 wrap up please.

7 ZADE HAOSHS: Sure and DCWP helps ensure that
8 working families and small business owners can access
9 the tax credits they've earned while avoiding
10 unnecessary penalties and fees.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay.

12 ZADE HAOSHS: Thank you very much for your time.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.

14 SALUA BAIDA: Hello there. My name is Salua
15 Baida. I've been unmuted; may I speak?

16 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yes, absolutely.

17 SALUA BAIDA: Thank you so much. Give me just
18 one moment please. I am in fact getting the kiddos
19 home from the bus stop, so thank you for your
20 patience. I knew this would happen the moment that I
21 walked in the house and away from my Wi-Fi. Just one
22 moment please.

23 Wonderful, thank you Chairwoman Menin and members
24 of the Committee for the opportunity to testify
25 today. My name is Salua Baida and I am a proud

1
2 domestic employer and member of hand and hand, the
3 Domestic Employers Network. This is a group where
4 employers actually advocate to the rights of their
5 employees. So, I come before you today not only as
6 an employer or as a parent, but also as the daughter
7 of a former domestic worker. You see my mother was a
8 housecleaner and a home attendant to elders when I
9 was a kiddo.

10 So my mother and I understand first hand how
11 critical it is for workers to know their rights and
12 for employers to understand their responsibilities.
13 Domestic workers, the nannies, housecleaners and
14 homecare workers who make other work possible, they
15 have long been excluded from basic labor protections.
16 Over the past decade, New York City has made
17 incredible strides in writing this historic wrong.
18 Through legislation like the Domestic Worker Bill of
19 Rights and Intro. 339, but passing laws is only the
20 first step. The real challenge is making sure that
21 workers and employers alike know these rights exist
22 and that these laws are upheld and that's why I'm
23 here today from the bus stop to urge you to continue
24 funding the Department of Consumer and Worker
25 Protection, DCWP and to invest \$800,000 in the NYC

1
2 Coalition for Domestic Worker Employer Empowerment
3 Initiative, which has done critical outreach and
4 education in partnership with DCWP.

5 The nature of domestic work as we know, it's
6 isolated, it's behind closed doors, and it's often
7 between individuals with language and cultural
8 differences with serious power dynamics at play
9 because work inside the home makes the enforcement of
10 labor laws uniquely challenging.

11 So, without proactive education and outreach,
12 many workers remain in the dark, vulnerable to wage
13 and theft exploitation and without clear guidance,
14 many employers, even those who want to do right by
15 their employees are left unsure of just how to
16 provide just and legal working conditions.

17 So our coalition in partnership with DCWP has
18 been going -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired. Thank you.

20 SALUA BAIDA: Directly, excuse me?

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

22 SALUA BAIDA: Oh, thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much for your
24 testimony, we appreciate it very much. Thank you.

25 SALUA BAIDA: Thank you as well.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, our next speaker.

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

4 TITO SINHA: Good afternoon Chairwoman Menin. My
5 name is Tito Sinha. I am the - I direct the Workers
6 Rights Practice at Take Root Justice. We thank the
7 Council Committee for the opportunity to submit this
8 testimony, which is in support of increased, robust,
9 sustainable and multiyear based line funding for the
10 Low Wage Workers Support Initiative. Low Wage Worker
11 Support is the only dedicated city funding that
12 ensures that low wage immigrant workers have redress
13 from wage theft, sick leave violations,
14 discrimination, retaliation, and other workplace
15 injustices. In the past few years, the funding has
16 supported our work in representing immigrant workers,
17 including domestic workers before DCWP and as a
18 result of DCWP's robust enforcement, workers have
19 been able to recover back pay for unlawful
20 retaliation, sick leave, pay and statutory penalties.

21 We've participated in DCWP's Paid Care Mediation
22 Program for Domestic Workers and we commend the
23 agency for having that program. We commend the
24 agency and investigators and Council for working
25 collaboratively with our work as we believe our work

1
2 supports the agency to better enforce the city's laws
3 and its mission to protect workers rights.

4 I am here because rather than engaging in this
5 yearly effort to renew this crucial funding, we
6 request that City Council demonstrate its ongoing
7 commitment to immigrant workers by renewing and
8 expanding this baseline funding from \$2 million to \$3
9 million. This expansion will stabilize the funding
10 so low wage and immigrant workers can continue to
11 receive this essential advocacy.

12 Now more than ever, low wage immigrant workers
13 need champions from advocates such as Take Root
14 Justice and our allied partners and they need a
15 robust enforcement agency such as DCWP. Our ability
16 to continue this work under low wage worker support
17 needs the City Council and we thank you for your
18 support.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

20 JORGE ROSERO: Good afternoon. I'm Jorge Rosero,
21 I'm the Associate Director for Chhaya CDC. For 25
22 years, Chhaya has built equitable and thriving
23 neighborhoods by fostering the self-determination,
24 housing instability, and economic wellbeing of South
25 Asian and Indo Caribbean communities across New York

1
2 City. We provide housing, tax, small businesses, and
3 financial counseling to thousands of New Yorkers a
4 year. Serving some of the most vulnerable low income
5 communities in Queens.

6 Chhaya's financial counseling services have been
7 transformative for us in the South Asian communities
8 in Queens. New York, providing individuals and
9 families with the tools they need to achieve
10 financial security and long term economic stability.

11 Through personalized guidance, we help clients
12 reduce debts, salvage and build credit, set financial
13 goals and develop savings plans tailored to their
14 unique needs. Our services also empower community
15 members to open safe and affordable bank accounts,
16 ensuring that they have access to secure financial
17 resources that support their journey toward greater
18 financial independence. By addressing key financial
19 challenges and equipping clients with the knowledge
20 and strategies to make informed decisions, we're
21 fostering the culture of financial empowerment and
22 resilience in our community.

23 This critical work has been made possible
24 throughout the generous support of the New York City
25 Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, whose

1
2 funding has enabled us to span our reach and impact.
3 With their support, we have been able to serve
4 countless families who may have otherwise traveled to
5 navigate complex financial systems. This impact of
6 our work goes beyond individual financial success.
7 It strengthens the economic fabric of the entire
8 community by promoting financial literacy, stability
9 and growth. As we continue to provide these vital
10 services -

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 JORGE ROSERO: We remain committed to ensuring
13 that the member of the community has the opportunity
14 to build a strong financial vision and to create a
15 brighter, more secure future. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much. And I'm
17 now going to call the next panel on Zoom, David
18 Colodny, Shelley Miller, Melat Sayoum, Ofelia
19 Salgado.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 DAVID COLODNY: Good afternoon Chair Menin and
22 members of the Committee. Thank you for the
23 opportunity to testify in support of the renewal and
24 expansion of the Low Wage Worker Support Initiative.
25 My name is David Colodny, I'm the Managing Attorney

1
2 for the Workers Rights program at Catholic Migration
3 Services. Catholic Migration Services provides free
4 legal services in the areas of immigration, tenants
5 rights and workers rights. I'd like to share some
6 stories of CMS clients to illustrate the working
7 additions the low wage workers face and how workers
8 benefit from Low Wage Workers Support Initiative.

9 First, our office recently represented five
10 workers employed by three midtown Manhattan
11 restaurants. Our clients worked 12 hour shifts, five
12 or six days per week and received hourly wages
13 ranging between \$3.20 and \$6.52, well below the
14 minimum wage and without overtime. We filed a case
15 in federal district court in Manhattan and ultimately
16 recovered a settlement of \$185,000 for our clients.
17 We also recently assisted two workers who had worked
18 at a Brooklyn Bagel shop working as much as 68 hours
19 per week and obtained a settlement for them for
20 \$165,000.

21 I'd also like to share an example of a case that
22 highlights the important role worker centers play. A
23 couple years ago, several workers from a commercial
24 cleaning contractor at Rikers Island went a worker
25 center called New Immigrant Community Empowerment in

1
2 Jackson Heights. The workers were not only not
3 receiving a prevailing wage, but they also were
4 required to kick back a portion of their wages to
5 their supervisors between \$100 and \$200 per week
6 typically out of their wages.

7 We advocated to the New York Attorney General's
8 Office to open a criminal investigation, which they
9 did and that ultimately resulted in a settlement
10 where 250 workers will -

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

12 DAVID COLODNY: Will spend slightly over \$1
13 million. So, we thank you for your consideration of
14 the Low Wage Worker Support Initiative and ask you to
15 increase funding from \$2 million to \$3 million per
16 unit. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay we're looking for
20 Shelley Miller.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, Melat Seyoum.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 SHELLEY MILLER: Yes, thank you and good day. I
25 first want to say good afternoon and thank you

1
2 Chairperson Menin and distinguished members of the
3 Committee for Worker and Consumer Protection. I'm
4 Shelley Miller, Director of New Ownership
5 Opportunities for the ICA group. We are a local co-
6 op developer of advocates and educators and one of
7 the original founders of the New York City Worker Co-
8 op and Business Development Initiative known as WCBDI
9 established in 2014 and I'm here today with my
10 colleagues in the initiative to ask the Council to
11 continue for the wonderful support you have given us
12 over the last ten years and to continue in next years
13 budget and firmly into the future. As you may
14 already know, the initiative has helped create over
15 1,000 jobs, more than 9,000 entrepreneurs have had
16 education and technical assistance and we've created
17 nearly 200 worker co-op businesses that offer higher
18 hourly wages, better working conditions and benefits
19 and build wealth and equity for workers, particularly
20 those from marginal groups, Black and Brown
21 communities, a lot more women owned businesses and
22 immigrant owned businesses which is really important
23 in today's atmosphere.

24 Another notable quality is that more and more
25 CBO's are becoming interested in helping to develop

1
2 worker co-ops or clients they serve who face
3 employment barriers so they can help to employ their
4 own graduates, people with disabilities, the
5 homeless, effected youth and veterans, recovering
6 substances abuse and those who are recovering from
7 domestic abuse and that's a new area that we are
8 working with as well.

9 We're working to make these businesses more and
10 more sustainable. As during the pandemic, they showed
11 that they were both more resilient and more
12 sustainable to many other comparable small
13 businesses. So, the TA that we provided to them
14 during that time and that we always provide during
15 all time -

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

17 SHELLEY MILLER: To these businesses. If I'm out
18 of time I just want to say in closing that we want to
19 ask the Council to continue to fund us and to enhance
20 our funding to \$5 million and \$12.00.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, I'm sorry you're going
22 to have to wrap up. We have to give everyone the
23 exact same amount of time.

24 SHELLEY MILLER: Thank you so much and that's it.

25 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you and Ofelia Salgado.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MELAT SEYOUM: Sorry, Melat, I was next in queue.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Sorry, sorry, we got out of order. So sorry about that, yes.

MELAT SEYOUM: That's okay.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

MELAT SEYOUM: Hi, good afternoon honorable Chairperson Menin and distinguished members of the New York City Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection. My name is Melat Seyoum and I am the Director of Political Affairs and Strategic Partnerships at the New York City Network of Worker Owned Cooperatives, also known as NYC NOWC.

We are the member led local trade association representing worker cooperative businesses and democratic workplaces in New York City Metropolitan area. I am here alongside my colleagues from the Democracy at Work Institute, Center for Family Life, Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition and our advocacy Council Members representing ten other organizations that make up the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative.

As many before us have shared, we are here during these unprecedented times to support immigrant worker

1
2 owners in New York City, asking the New York City
3 Council to continue supporting the expansion of
4 worker ownership in next years budget and firmly into
5 the future. Since the inception of the initiative,
6 we have shared - we have created over 200 new
7 cooperative businesses and over 1,200 new jobs that
8 are not only providing higher hourly wages but also
9 building wealth and assets for individuals.

10 We are overwhelmingly BIPOC women and immigrants.
11 We have seen first hand how the initiative has served
12 to bolster our sector, strengthening and sustaining
13 cooperative businesses and creating new ones. The
14 initiative partners have collectively worked to
15 create a comprehensive ecosystem of support for
16 cooperative businesses that not only ensures the
17 creation of new cooperatives in low income areas but
18 also the technical assistance needed to sustain
19 businesses and create jobs. As well as the education
20 and outreach needed for communities, interested
21 entrepreneurs and allied organizations.

22 We did a lot of work during the pandemic and
23 brought in over \$20 million in grants and loans to
24 cooperatives to keep them afloat and we did this with
25 a \$3.7 million budget. We ask City Council to

1
2 enhance our funding to five million, ninety seven
3 thousand and eight two dollars in order for our
4 initiatives to double down and do the work that is
5 essential for this economic recovery for cooperative
6 businesses.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

8 MELAT SEYOUM: Thank you for this opportunity to
9 testify and we hope you consider us in the budget
10 priorities negotiations. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. Okay, Ofelia
12 Salgado.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 OFELIA SALGADO: Yes, hi good afternoon and thank
15 you for your time Chair Menin and distinguished
16 Council Members on the Committee for Consumer and
17 Worker Protection. My name is Ofelia Salgado. I am
18 a corporate business developer at Sunset Park,
19 Central for Family Business. We are a 47 year old
20 social service organization, committed to helping low
21 income Brooklyn families build sustainable futures.

22 I'm here today to respectfully request as my
23 colleagues have that the City Council continue its
24 support for the Worker Cooperative Business
25

1
2 Development Initiative by allocating \$5.1 million for
3 Fiscal Year 2026.

4 Since joining WCDBI in 2014, CFO has incubated 27
5 cooperative businesses in domestic work, empowering
6 over 600 women to control their economic futures.
7 Each year, we train over 400 participants in business
8 management and cooperative leadership and provide
9 more than 250 business consultations, ensuring
10 stability and growth for existing cooperatives. With
11 your support, we've expanded our impact and outreach
12 every corner of New York City. Notably, we launched
13 a bingo, an online platform where clients book
14 services for more cooperatives. Since 2017 Up and Go
15 has generated over \$3 million directly benefiting
16 over 100 families, more than 100 families.

17 Cooperative members now earn an average of \$33.00 per
18 hour. That's more than double the typical \$16.00 per
19 hour that a New York City domestic worker men make.

20 More importantly, they have completely eliminated
21 wage theft, which as we've heard over and over again
22 today, it's an issue and that really helps us ensure
23 safe and equitable working conditions. These
24 achievements are possible only with the continued
25 support of the New York City Council, your investment

1
2 in worker owned cooperatives is crucial to combating
3 economic inequality and building resilient
4 communities.

5 So, on behalf of Center for Family Life, thank
6 you for your commitment on economic equity and we
7 look forward to your continued support. Thank you.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. And our last
10 panel is Ana Rodriguez, Clara Calvo, and I believe we
11 need interpreter's, Catherine Murcek, Evan Casper-
12 Futterman, Julian McKinley and Christopher Leon
13 Johnson.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
16 [02:53:58]- [02:54:03].

17 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
18 [02:54:05]- [02:54:11].

19 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE: Good
20 afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to being in
21 the panel.

22 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
23 [02:54:18]- [02:54:25].

24 TRANSLATOR: My name is Ana Rodriguez.
25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:54:30]- [02:54:35].

TRANSLATOR: I am a member of the Council of Advocacy in the Cooperatives in New York.

ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:54:43].

TRANSLATOR: NYC NOWC.

ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:54:44]- [02:54:50].

TRANSLATOR: I am here because I want to speak on behalf of the program WCDBI.

ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:54:59]- [02:55:08].

TRANSLATOR: I am here to foster conscience in - I'm here to help foster the programs that develop economic and social conscience.

ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:55:20]- [02:55:33].

TRANSLATOR: I am, I'm sorry, I'm having a problem with the sound. May I ask her to repeat?

SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE: [02:55:37]-[02:55:39]

ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:55:43]- [02:56:01].

1
2 TRANSLATOR: Okay, I am here on behalf of the
3 Highway Care, it's a children childcare, which holds
4 annual meetings like Mixteco's.

5 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
6 [02:56:16]- [02:56:30].

7 TRANSLATOR: We were born in 2016 as a result of
8 the lack of support for communities and to find
9 dignified salaries and stable situations.

10 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
11 [02:56:43]- [02:57:00].

12 TRANSLATOR: The WCDBI -

13 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
14 [02:57:01]- [02:57:04].

15 TRANSLATOR: The WCDBI has given work to the
16 cooperatives that take care, for example, the
17 carpenters and people who take care of elder people.

18 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
19 [02:57:18]- [02:57:25].

20 TRANSLATOR: I am here to testify that the -

21 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
22 [02:57:25]- [02:57:30].

23 TRANSLATOR: I am here to speak on behalf of the
24 cooperatives because it allows people who are
25

1
2 suffering with the immigration problems and people
3 who didn't get education in our own countries.

4 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
5 [02:57:43]- [02:57:49].

6 TRANSLATOR: So, for us women -

7 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
8 [02:57:49]- [02:57:51].

9 TRANSLATOR: For us women we suffer a lot because
10 of the expectations put on us.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired, thank you.

12 TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
13 [02:58:01].

14 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
15 [02:58:05]- [02:58:14].

16 TRANSLATOR: Okay, I thank you very much. I want
17 to thank you for having - for taking us in
18 consideration and I want to end with these five
19 words.

20 ANA RODRIGUZ: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
21 [02:58:26]- [02:58:31].

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I'm sorry we have to give
23 everyone the same amount of time. If there's
24 additional testimony that she wants to submit in
25 writing, we're delighted to get that.

TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:58:37]- [02:58:41].

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much. Thank you and our next testimony.

TRANSLATOR: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:58:49].

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CLARA CALVO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:58:52]- [02:59:04].

TRANSLATOR: I will say some parts in English and then you can help me but I have it in Spanish actually. Okay.

CLARA CALVO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[02:59:13]- [02:59:44].

TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon members of the Committee of Worker and Consumer Protection and members of the City Council. My name is Clara Calvo and I am a worker/owner of the Cooperative Homecare Associates, CHCA and in the Council of Defenders for the Cooperative. The Work Cooperatives in the city of New York. I repped to the United States in 1995 seeking a better life for my three kids and me.

CLARA CALVO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:

[03:00:11]- [03:00:32].

1
2 TRANSLATOR: Thank you to WCBDI for helping us
3 continue working in the community. Also in 2001, I
4 founded Cooperative Homecare Associate, CHCA, it's a
5 company in the Bronx that helps homecare workers.

6 CLARA CALVO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
7 [03:00:51]- [03:01:09].

8 TRANSLATOR: Just like CHCA, there's a lot of
9 cooperatives in the City of New York such as help for
10 the elders cleaning, caregiving and many more
11 services that continue to have the economic growth of
12 the city. Thank you again to WCBDI.

13 CLARA CALVO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
14 [03:01:30]- [03:01:47].

15 TRANSLATOR: If cooperative continue growing and
16 if you support us, we will have many more people who
17 will join our businesses and build a hand, a working
18 hand which is way more committed and self sufficient
19 and allow New York to continue with its economic
20 growth.

21 CLARA CALVO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE:
22 [03:02:08]- [03:02:35].

23 TRANSLATOR: With your support and with the
24 commitment from the cooperatives, it is urgent that
25 sorry - so yes, your supporting commitment is very

1
2 urgent and important so that we are just not another
3 number of statistics of those small businesses that
4 just disappeared and we hope that you have in mind
5 our priorities and thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you very much.
7 And now, Catherine Murcek.

8 CATHERINE MURCEK: Hi, thank you for the
9 opportunity to testify to testify online today. My
10 name is Catherine Murcek and I am a worker/owner a
11 Samankaya Yoga Back Care & Scoliosis Collective.

12 We are a member of the New York City network of
13 worker co-ops, also known as NYC NOWC, which is a
14 partner organization of WCDBI, which you heard about
15 from my colleagues.

16 Your support of our community of democratically
17 run businesses helps to protect and create jobs for
18 women, immigrant workers and communities of color
19 across the five boroughs and in a wide array of
20 industries. I'm testifying today to urge you to
21 continue to support the great work of WCDBI enhancing
22 their funding to \$5.09 million and to also support
23 commercial rent stabilization to protect New York
24 City's workers and small businesses from
25 displacement. These measures help protect consumers

1
2 and workers alike by creating stability and
3 resilience in our local economy.

4 My co-op Samamkaya, is a very special little
5 studio in Chelsea specializing in therapeutic yoga
6 for back care with classes both online and in studio.
7 I'm proud to say my 19 other worker owners and I just
8 celebrated ten years of democratically running the
9 studio together in the same space the whole time. To
10 make yoga accessible to all ages and abilities, we
11 use specialized rope, balls, and equipment, which
12 incurred a hefty startup cost, so we're still paying
13 back. Our cooperative business structure makes us
14 unique among yoga studios in New York and is one of
15 the reasons we were more resilient through the
16 pandemic than many of the yoga studios that we sadly
17 lost.

18 Even though the pandemic forced us to close our
19 physical space temporarily, we banded together to
20 decide as a team how we would pivot, divide the labor
21 and we worked together to keep the studio afloat
22 while making sure our teachers who most needed to
23 work, could keep teaching online and make ends meet
24 and that's just one example of how a cooperative
25 business can be really resilient. We were very

1
2 grateful to have access to technical support from
3 WCDBI partners and a couple small grants specific to
4 worker co-ops. One example is NYC NOWC's Cooperative
5 Sustainability Fund, which helped us pay for
6 consulting sessions, which helped us managed some
7 communication and distribution of labor challenges.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.

12 CATHERINE MURCEK: Okay, thank you. In
13 conclusion just please enhance WCDBI funding to \$5.09
14 million. There's more in my written testimony and
15 please support commercial rent stabilization.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you.

17 CATHERINE MURCEK: Thanks.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much and our
19 next speaker is Evan Casper-Futterman.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 EVAN CASPER-FUTTERMAN: Hi, good afternoon. My
22 name is Evan Casper-Futterman. I'm a Director of
23 Planning and Education at the Northwest Bronx
24 Committee Clergy Coalition, which is a 50 year old
25 community led organization in organizing people

1
2 across generations for racial justice and economic
3 democracy.

4 Alongside my colleagues from the WCDBI, I'm
5 asking New York City Council to support our budget
6 ask of five million, ninety seven thousand, eight two
7 dollars in next years budget.

8 I'm speaking today not only as a practitioner but
9 also as a researcher and a professor whose taught for
10 eight years on topics of cooperative development.

11 New York City Council made history by passing the
12 nations first worker cooperative business development
13 initiative. Across this country, the work has
14 continued to grow and adapt all based on the courage
15 and vision of champions in the New York City Council.

16 Although the initiative works most closely with
17 SBS we're grateful of the support of DCWP over the
18 past decade which has supported our work particularly
19 through the creation of a report on strategies for
20 building community wealth in New York City through
21 the Office of Financial Empowerment back in 2019 and
22 2020. If you haven't read it, it's a really good
23 report. Check it out.

24 The creation for of and support for worker owned
25 businesses is strongly aligned to the mission of

1
2 consumer worker protections over which this Committee
3 has jurisdiction, in addition to building wealth and
4 skills of ownership, worker owned businesses of all
5 sizes has been shown in numerous studies to have
6 increased job security, lower turnover, higher wages,
7 more assets and wealth that their non-owning peers
8 across age, gender and race and greater productivity
9 and job satisfaction. Worker ownership supports the
10 mission of consumer and worker protection by
11 reinforcing and encouraging high business practices
12 which reduces the cost of enforcement to taxpayers
13 and reduces the demands of staff of DCWP and other
14 city enforcement agencies who have to pursue bad
15 corporate actors who abuse workers. Because
16 predictably true as well, because of the kinds of
17 workers and industries that WCDBI has engaged with,
18 primarily low wage, high turnover industries where
19 workers are commonly exploited and which businesses
20 are commonly cited for violations and illegal
21 practices. Every dollar spent on worker ownership;
22 every worker owner created. Every new worker owned
23 business in our city needs a better life for workers,
24 fewer bad actors in our neighborhood commercial
25 corridors and better value-

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

3 EVAN CASPER-FUTTERMAN: Thank you for the
4 opportunity to testify today and we hope you consider
5 our budget priorities in the upcoming negotiation
6 process.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much and our
8 next testimony is from Julian McKinley.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 JULIAN MCKINLEY: Hi everyone. Thank you so
11 much. Good afternoon Chair Menin and distinguished
12 members of the Committee. It is an honor to address
13 you today. I appreciate the time to share about our
14 work at WCDBI and the importance of worker
15 cooperatives.

16 Thanks to the City Council's investment over the
17 past ten fiscal cycles. WCDBI has helped create and
18 support a resilient employment and business ownership
19 opportunities that are really unlike any other in New
20 York or across the nation.

21 The worker cooperative business model puts agency
22 and assets in the hands of workers and their
23 communities. They are a haven for workers in little
24 wage, high turnover, and often exploitative
25

1
2 industries who have been traditionally marginalized
3 and excluded from the broader economy.

4 In New York City, the majority of worker/owners
5 are immigrant women of color and industries like
6 janitorial services, home healthcare, and childcare,
7 for example, cooperative homecare associates who have
8 already been mentioned on this, during this hearing.

9 Through worker ownership, workers within these
10 businesses are able to bring home a living wage
11 significantly above initial averages. They are
12 building assets that contribute to financial
13 stability, building worker power and leadership and
14 transforming industry standards for the better over
15 time. In fact, transformative industry models using
16 worker owner launched in New York City around home
17 healthcare, starting with Cooperative Homecare
18 Associates are now being adopted across the country,
19 including in Philadelphia and in San Francisco.

20 Since its inception, in Fiscal Year 2015, WCDBI
21 with Council's support has created more than 1,000
22 jobs and pathways to business ownership, created more
23 than 200 New Worker Cooperative Businesses that are
24 for higher hourly wages, and have reached more than
25

1
2 10,000 entrepreneurs with education and technical
3 assistance services.

4 Worker cooperatives are unique in their ability
5 to establish, grow and retain community wealth to
6 make entrepreneurship accessible and to create
7 stable, dignified work. We urge City Council to
8 continue investing in worker cooperatives through
9 WCDBI by enhancing our funding to \$5.09 million for
10 Fiscal Year 2026.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired. Thank you.

12 JULIAN MCKINLEY: Businesses and I thank you so
13 much.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you very much for
15 your testimony and next, we have Christopher Leon
16 Johnson.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello Chair Menin. My
19 name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I am here to
20 testify and show my support to two nonprofits. One
21 is the Worker Justice Project that gets money through
22 via 307 England and the Street Vendor Project that
23 gives money to the Urban Justice Center. I am
24 calling on the City Council to preserve their funding
25 within this budget for FY26. I am calling for \$3

1
2 million for the Worker Justice Project for DWCP and
3 I'm calling for \$3 million into the Street Vendor
4 Project in via DWCP. Both of those organizations do
5 a lot of great work. Both of those organizations
6 need a lot of help. We all know that right now,
7 there's a tremendous mayoral cycle and I'm calling on
8 the Speaker to preserve their funding despite the
9 fact that you're running for Mayor. These
10 organizations do a lot of great work for the city.
11 They do a lot of great work for the members. They're
12 mostly migrants, good migrants that do a lot of great
13 work. We all know that there's a [INAUDIBLE
14 03:11:07] caucus, an antimigrant, this antimigrant in
15 general. And I'm calling on the City Council to just
16 listen to what they got to say and fund these
17 organizations.

18 At the same time, these organizations need to
19 stay funded while the Speaker is still running for
20 Mayor because like I said before, I had a big feeling
21 that the Mayor, uhm Speaker Adrienne Adams is
22 weaponizing the budget to make these two nonprofits
23 that have a lot of slaves in the City Council, the
24 Worker Justice Project, that Street Vendor Project to
25 support her campaign and if they don't, they're going

1
2 to be defunded. I'm calling on you as the Chair,
3 Mrs. Menin to make sure that their funding be
4 preserved and they still get over \$1 million in their
5 budget. They do this fiasco cycle, despite the fact
6 that Adrienne Adams is - despite the fact that Worker
7 Justice Project is supporting Brad Lander for Mayor
8 and the Street Vendor Project is backing Jessica
9 Ramos for Mayor.

10 So, shout out to the Workers Justice Project,
11 shout out to what they do. Shout out to the Street
12 Vendor Project and what they do and we have to
13 preserve their funding and make sure we protect our
14 migrants. Protect the migrants that come out and
15 bust their butt -

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time is
17 expired.

18 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: And ride and deliver
19 food, their medicines and uhm -

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay thank you. Your time is
21 expired.

22 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: I'm going to send in
23 my written testimony. Thank you so much. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you very much.

25 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And we have one more speaker
3 who just filled out a card who I believe is here.
4 Celestino Pointes (SP?) are you here. Okay.

5 CELESTINO POINTES: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
6 [03:13:11]- [03:14:01].

7 TRANSLATOR: Hello, my name is Celestino. I sell
8 food in uptown Manhattan. First of all, thank you
9 for the opportunity of participating and hearing this
10 this hearing about budget or budgeting. I am here to
11 demand a hearing where you are able to listen to the
12 voices of the street vendors. We need a system, a
13 vending system that works. A street vending system
14 that works.

15 We want you to approve Intro. Number 431 so we
16 can be able to obtain licenses and permits. Thank
17 you very much Chair Menin.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you, great. Thank you
19 very much. So, if we've inadvertently missed anyone
20 who registered to testify today and has yet to be
21 called, please speak with a Sergeant or if you are
22 remote, use the Zoom hand function and you will be
23 called in the order that your hand has been raised.
24 I'm just going to call three names who registered on
25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Zoom, Condicare Tafu Gamed(SP?), Maria Gonzales, Alex Stein. Are any of you here?

No, okay, so I'm going to now close the hearing. I first of all want to thank everyone who came out today on this very important budget hearing. We really appreciate all of your testimony and thank you again for taking the time to be here today with us.

[GAVEL].

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 15, 2025