

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES JOINTLY  
WITH COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER  
EQUITY

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November 18, 2020  
Start: 10:21 a.m.  
Recess: 1:28 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING

B E F O R E: Deborah Rose,  
Chairperson for the Committee on  
Youth Services

Helen K. Rosenthal,  
Chairperson for Committee on Women  
and Gender Equity

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala  
Ben Kallos  
Brad S. Lander  
Mathieu Eugene  
Farrah Louis  
Vanessa Gibson

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3 A P P E A R A N C E S

4 Susan Haskell  
5 Deputy Commissioner of Youth Services at DYCD

6 Darryl Rattray  
7 Associate Commissioner for Youth Services at DYCD

8 Wanda Ascherl  
9 Assistant Commissioner for Community at DYCD

10 Tracy Caldron  
11 Assistant Commissioner of COMPASS at DYCD

12 Jagdeen Phanor  
13 Chief Financial Officer at DYCD

14 Nevita Bailey  
15 Deputy Chief Financial Officer at DYCD

16 Josh Wallack  
17 Deputy Chancellor at DOE at the Department of  
18 Education

19 Chris Tricarico  
20 Senior Executive Director of the Office of Food  
21 and Nutrition Services at DOE

22 Faith Behum  
23 Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA Federation of  
24 New York

25 Gregory Brender  
United Neighborhood Houses

David Gaskin  
24 President and CEO of Seamen's Society for  
25 Children and Families

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Felicia Soodeen  
Vice President of Seamen's Society for Children  
and Families

Nellie Suarez  
Director of the Family Day Care Network and  
Seamen's Society for Children and Families

1  
2 SERGEANT HOPE: Good morning and welcome to the  
3 Committee on Gender Equity jointly with the Committee  
4 on Youth Services. At this time, would all panelists  
5 please turn on your videos. I repeat, at this time,  
6 would all panelists please turn on your videos.  
7 Thank you.

8 To minimize disruption, please place all  
9 electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode. If you  
10 wish to submit testimony, you may do at  
11 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). I repeat,  
12 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Chair's, we are ready to  
13 begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Good morning. Thank you for  
15 joining our virtual hearing today on this very  
16 important issue. The status of the learning labs  
17 program and childcare in New York City. My name is  
18 Debi Rose and I and the Chair of the New York City  
19 Council's Committee on Youth Services.

20 Today, the Committee on Youth Services is joined  
21 by the Committee on Women and Gender Equity and my  
22 friend and colleague Chair Helen Rosenthal. We will  
23 conduct an oversight hearing on the Department of  
24 Youth and community developments learning labs  
25 programs, identifying current issues and potential

1  
2 responses to them as well as the successes and ways  
3 to amplify them. But first, I would like to  
4 recognize that we have been joined by Council Members  
5 Louis, Council Member Eugene, Council Member Kallos,  
6 Council Member Ayala and we will be joined by Council  
7 Member Holden.

8 But even before the COVID outbreak forced New  
9 York City public schools to transition to remote  
10 learning for at least some of the time, childcare,  
11 especially affordable childcare was a serious issue  
12 for working parents. It is a problem that  
13 disproportionately plagues working mothers and even  
14 more so single parents.

15 It is an obstacle to women's full participation  
16 in the economy and society. It eats up a significant  
17 position of a family's income, exacerbating daily  
18 survival struggles for the most vulnerable New York  
19 City families. Producing constant anxiety and many  
20 sleepless nights. With the COVID outbreak forcing  
21 New York City children to spend increasingly more  
22 time learning remotely, working parents are now  
23 facing the necessity of finding not only afterschool  
24 care but childcare for remote instruction days as  
25

1 well. Making already stressful circumstances even  
2 more challenging.  
3

4 I know just how difficult the situation is, not  
5 only am I the Chair of the Committee on Youth  
6 Services but I am a grandma with two grandchildren  
7 whose parents are both essential workers. And while  
8 my grandchildren, some think they might be lucky that  
9 I am their grandmother and I get to mind them, there  
10 are other parents that - while their parents are  
11 working, not all New York City households are equally  
12 as fortunate.

13 And since I am also working remotely while caring  
14 for my grandchildren, I can tell you that I truly  
15 understand parents frustration and the challenges  
16 around remote learning. It is a tough situation all  
17 around.

18 In a move unprecedented since World War II when  
19 the nation mobilized to provide free childcare under  
20 the 1943 Lanham Act, to support women's labor force  
21 participation as part of the war effort, our state  
22 and city recognized childcare as an essential public  
23 service in an effort to cope with the COVID outbreak.  
24 By first establishing regional enrichment centers and  
25 emergency childcare centers for children of essential

1  
2 workers and later launched the DYCD's Learning Labs  
3 program to provide care and enrichment for children  
4 in grades K-8 on remote learning days.

5       Given that the learning labs were launched in  
6 record time and during a national crisis, it is only  
7 expected that there would be issues and challenges  
8 surrounding this program. We are here today to  
9 examine the rollout of the program, the problems that  
10 have arisen, the responses to them and the  
11 encouraging success that they have had.

12       We are here today to hear the concerns of  
13 parents, providers and advocates and to work  
14 collaboratively on addressing the issues and concerns  
15 to ensure that our children's education and social  
16 emotional needs are being met and that our parents  
17 are assisted in their roles as caregivers and workers  
18 and are able to participate in the workforce.

19       I want to thank Chair Rosenthal and the Committee  
20 on Women and Gender Equity for joining our hearing  
21 today, as well as the staff behind the scenes who are  
22 making sure that this online hearing runs smoothly.

23 I would like to thank the Youth Committee Staff for  
24 their work on this issue. I would like to thank  
25 Committee Counsel Paul Sinegal who unfortunately is

1 leaving the Council. He will really be missed. He  
2 has served this Committee and others well.

3  
4 Committee Policy Analyst Anastassia Zimina,  
5 Finance Analyst Michele Peregin and Elizabeth Arts  
6 from the Speakers Office, sorry Elizabeth and I want  
7 to give a big thank you to my staff as well. Chief  
8 of Staff Christine Johnson and my Legislative  
9 Director Isa Cortez and Vanorie Ranawary[SP?].

10 And with that, I will now turn to my Co-Chair for  
11 remarks Chair Rosenthal.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much Chair  
13 Rose. I am Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Chair of  
14 the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. My  
15 pronouns are she and her. I want to start by  
16 thanking Chair Rose of the Committee on Youth  
17 Services for holding this hearing with us and with  
18 her very informed and informative opening statement.  
19 I also want to congratulate her on making the cover  
20 of City and State this week. She is a powerful  
21 representative of Staten Island.

22 We already know that childcare is a gendered  
23 issue that disproportionately effects women. As the  
24 New York Time put it in September, the loss of  
25 childcare during the pandemic has limited many



1  
2 working mothers hours and when parents decide that  
3 one of them should give up their job, it is usually  
4 the lower paid one, most often the mother.

5       Single parents who are usually women, are even  
6 more impacted by the loss of childcare. This is why  
7 so many were hopeful that the Mayor's announcement of  
8 100,000 learning lab, which is K-8 and learning  
9 bridges, 3 and 4-year-olds seats would allow them to  
10 keep their jobs. As people went back to work, their  
11 children would be well taken care of.

12       So, today, we are here to discuss the pandemic,  
13 the City's Pandemic Childcare Initiative with a focus  
14 on K-8 learning lab program administered by the DYCD.  
15 There have been hurdles opening the learning lab  
16 bridges seats and we want to understand why. When  
17 Mayor de Blasio unveiled his plan to provide certain  
18 working families childcare, respective of a family's  
19 ability to pay, he promised 100,000 slots. As of  
20 last month, we are only a fifth of the way there.

21       The one learning bridges site in my district with  
22 30 seats is completely full. There is also only one  
23 learning lab site. I recently spoke with the leading  
24 childcare provider in my district about why they did  
25 not respond to the city's request to provide

1  
2 services. They advised that had "concerns related to  
3 space, the lack of clear programmatic definition and  
4 limitations associated with staffing up of full  
5 program for an unspecified period of time."

6 I have also heard from parents that the learning  
7 bridge site they were given after they applied, was  
8 too far away from their home to be useful. So, they  
9 did not take their given site.

10 The Council understands that the unprecedented  
11 challenges we are facing in this pandemic but we are  
12 now several months into the school year. The city's  
13 much held plan to switch from the rec centers to  
14 learning labs, so parents could continue to go to  
15 work and their children would be well taken of has  
16 not come to fruition. We need to prioritize our  
17 children their families and the providers that allow  
18 our city to keep working. It is important to note  
19 that D75 students face huge hurdles in accessing the  
20 learning labs/bridges program which DOE and DYCD have  
21 not addressed.

22 I am going to read parts of the statement we  
23 received from advocates from D75 students which  
24 speaks volumes. It is a few paragraphs, so bear with  
25 me. "Although the DOE's website states that students

1  
2 with disabilities are one of the priority groups for  
3 learning labs and states that students of D75 schools  
4 may attend learning labs, the city has not created  
5 any process for approving requests for accommodations  
6 or supports or supports for students with  
7 disabilities at learning lab programs. While  
8 programs and parents have asked DYCD or the  
9 individual learning lab programs for support, both  
10 DYCD and DOE have not provided support and as a  
11 result, programs have told parents that their  
12 children with disabilities cannot attend.

13 For example, we are aware of students whose IEP's  
14 require them to have one on one paraprofessionals to  
15 provide support during learning. IEP stands for  
16 Individual Education Plans. So, this is the plan  
17 that the city agrees that that child needs, sorry.

18 However, the DOE says that due to a union issue,  
19 they cannot sent paraprofessionals to DYCD contracted  
20 learning lab sites and DYCD says they don't have  
21 funding outside the DOE to pay for paraprofessionals.  
22 The students are not getting their IEP mandated  
23 supports and are not able to attend learning lab  
24 programs."

1  
2 We have heard from parents who were able to get  
3 supports for their students at the Rec's in the  
4 summer and spring but now cannot get support at the  
5 learning labs. We understand that the blame is not  
6 on DYCD or DOE and we are here today to help. We  
7 want to understand what we need to do, so students,  
8 especially those with disabilities and their families  
9 and the providers are getting the support they need  
10 to participate in this program.

11 You know, we have invited many providers and  
12 parents to testify at this hearing. However, given  
13 that they are so thinly stretched, many could not  
14 take the time to join us today. We invite them to  
15 submit their stories and insights to  
16 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov) before Saturday. You  
17 testimony is invaluable as we navigate a path toward  
18 the best interests of our children.

19 Finally, I would like to thank my staff. My  
20 Chief of Staff Cindy Cardinal, my Legislative  
21 Director Madhuri Shukla as well as Committee Staff  
22 for their work in preparing for this hearing. Brenda  
23 McKinney my Counsel, Chloe Rivera Senior Legislative  
24 Policy Analyst, Monica Pepple Financial Analyst and  
25 Elizabeth Arts also from Community Engagement. And I

1  
2 am not sure there are any additional, yeah, I want to  
3 acknowledge the Council Members, the additional  
4 Council Members who are present Council Member  
5 Lander.

6 I will now send it back to Chair Rose to  
7 introduce the Moderator. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you so much Chair  
9 Rosenthal for your very thorough summary of what  
10 brings us to this hearing today. I will now turn it  
11 over to our Committee Legislative Counsel Brenda  
12 McKinney who will review some procedural items  
13 relating to today's hearing.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Chair Rose.  
15 So, my name is Brenda McKinney and I am the  
16 Legislative Counsel for the Committee on Women and  
17 Gender Equity at the New York City Council. I will  
18 be moderating today's hearing and I will be calling  
19 on people to testify.

20 Before we begin, as Chair Rose mentioned, we will  
21 be going over some housekeeping items. I would like  
22 to remind everyone that you will be on mute until I call  
23 on you to testify and after you are called upon, you  
24 will be unmuted by the host. Please listen for your  
25

1 name. I will periodically announce who the next  
2 panelist will be.

3  
4 Council Member questions will be limited to five  
5 minutes. Council Members, please note that this  
6 includes both your questions and the witness answers.  
7 Today, we will also allow a second round of questions  
8 at today's hearing. These questions will be limited  
9 to two minutes. Again, including both your question  
10 and the witnesses answer. For public testimony, I  
11 will be calling on people in panels. Council Members  
12 who have questions for a particular panelist should  
13 use the raise hand function in Zoom. You will be  
14 called on after everyone on the panel has completed  
15 their testimony. We anticipate that there will be  
16 three people on each panel.

17 For public panelists, once I call on your name, a  
18 member of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant  
19 at Arms will give you the go ahead to begin speaking  
20 after setting the timer. All public testimony and  
21 this timer will be set at three minutes and be  
22 limited to three minutes. After I call your name,  
23 please wait a brief moment for the Sergeant at Arms  
24 to announce that you may begin before starting your  
25 testimony, so that we can start the clock.

1  
2 So, with that, we will now move to Administration  
3 testimony and I will call on the following members of  
4 the Administration to testify. I will say all of  
5 your names first and then we will administer the  
6 oath.

7 So, now, we will call on Susan Haskell, Deputy  
8 Commissioner of Youth Services at DYCD, Darryl  
9 Rattray Associate Commissioner for Youth Services at  
10 DYCD, Wanda Ascherl and please excuse any  
11 pronunciation errors, Assistant Commissioner for  
12 Community at DYCD, Tracy Caldron Assistant  
13 Commissioner of COMPASS at DYCD, Jagdeen Phanor Chief  
14 Financial Officer at DYCD, Nevita Bailey Deputy Chief  
15 Financial Officer at DYCD, Josh Wallack Deputy  
16 Chancellor at DOE at the Department of Education,  
17 Chris Tricarico, again please excuse any  
18 mispronunciations, Senior Executive Director of the  
19 Office of Food and Nutrition Services at DOE. And  
20 with that, I will deliver the oath to all eight of  
21 you at once. So, after reading the oath, I will call  
22 on each of you by name. If you can please respond to  
23 the oath one at a time.

24 So, if each of you in your camera can please  
25 raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the

1  
2 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth  
3 before these Committee's and to respond honestly to  
4 Council Member questions today? Deputy Commissioner  
5 Susan Haskell?

6 SUSAN HASKELL: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Associate Commissioner Darryl  
8 Rattray? Darryl Rattray? Sorry, we might have a  
9 mute issue. Sorry, could you just for the record, so  
10 that we can get it on the record, Darryl Rattray, can  
11 you please respond to the oath?

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Unmute.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, if the host can please  
14 unmute Associate Commissioner Rattray. We will keep  
15 going apologies. Assistant Commissioner Wanda  
16 Ascherl?

17 WANDA ASCHERL: I do.

18 DARRYL RATTRAY: Testing, testing, can you hear  
19 me now?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

21 DARRYL RATTRAY: Oh, awesome. The tech problem  
22 would be me, right. I do.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Associate  
24 Commissioner Rattray. Assistant Commissioner Tracy  
25 Caldron? Assistant Commissioner Caldron?



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TRACY CALDRON: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Chief  
Financial Officer Jagdeen Phanor? Jagdeen Phanor?  
We will come back. Deputy Chief Financial Officer –

JAGDEEN PHANOR: I do, Jagdeen Phanor, I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much and there  
is a delay, apologies, so it might be an unmute or  
technical issue. So, thank you for your patience.  
Deputy Chief Financial Officer Nevita Bailey?

NEVITA BAILEY: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Deputy  
Chancellor Josh Wallack?

JOSH WALLACK: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much and finally  
Senior Executive Director Chris Tricarico, sorry,  
Tricarico? Senior Executive Director from DOE Chris  
Tricarico? Sir, you should be unmuted, can you  
please respond to the oath? We can keep going and  
swear him in if he responds to questions. Thank you  
so much for your patients.

CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: Did you hear me, I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We can, thank you so much.  
Thank you.

CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: Tricarico by the way.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can you repeat that again  
3 please?

4 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: Tricarico.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Tricarico. Thank you so  
6 much.

7 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: You are welcome.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alright, thank you and Deputy  
9 Commissioner Haskell, if you are ready, you may begin  
10 your testimony.

11 SUSAN HASKELL: Thank you. Good morning Chair  
12 Rose, Chair Rosenthal and members of the Youth  
13 Services and Women and Gender Equity Committee's. I  
14 am Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner for Youth  
15 Services from the Department of Youth and Community  
16 Development. I am joined by my DYCD colleagues,  
17 Chief Financial Officer Jagdeen Phanor, Associate  
18 Commissioner Darryl Rattray, Assistant Commissioner  
19 Wanda Ascherl, Assistant Commissioner Tracy Caldron  
20 and Deputy Chief Financial Officer Nevita Bailey.

21 From the New York City Department of Education, I  
22 am joined by Deputy Chancellor Josh Wallack and Trish  
23 Tricarico - Chris Tricarico. I messed up Chris not  
24 Tricarico, I am sorry Chris. Senior Executive  
25

1  
2 Director of the Office of Food and Nutrition  
3 Services.

4 On behalf of Commissioner Chong and Chancellor  
5 Carranza, thank you for the opportunity to appear  
6 today to discuss Learning Bridges. As you know  
7 Learning Bridges is a new program that provides free  
8 childcare options for children from 3K through 8<sup>th</sup>  
9 grade on days when they are scheduled for remote  
10 learning.

11 Since Mayor de Blasio announced this new  
12 initiative in the summer, DYCD, DOE, DDC MOCS and  
13 especially New York City's network of community based  
14 providers, I have been working at a record pace to  
15 recreate this important childcare option. Learning  
16 Bridges programs will remain open if in person  
17 schooling is suspended either citywide or on a  
18 neighborhood level.

19 We appreciate that both Committee's sponsoring  
20 this hearing recognize Learning Bridges critical role  
21 in the city's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.  
22 Helping young people stay on track academically and  
23 socially and assisting working parents. While we  
24 work to expand the number of available slots, current  
25 priority for placement is given to families in

1 temporary housing, including shelters and hotels.  
2  
3 Children of New York City DOE school and program  
4 staff, including staff of the Learning Bridges sites  
5 and other contracted early childhood providers.  
6 Families residing in NYCHA developments, children and  
7 family foster care or receiving other child welfare  
8 services. Students with disabilities, childrens  
9 whose parents or guardian is an essential worker or  
10 who were previously involved in a regional enrichment  
11 center.

12 We continue to open new programs in all five  
13 boroughs providing a free and safe location to  
14 support remote learning and enrichment activities for  
15 DOE students on the days when they are not in school.  
16 We added seats throughout the fall and we will make  
17 offers to more families. Interested parents of  
18 eligible students can apply at the DOE website  
19 [schools.nyc.gov/learningbridges](https://schools.nyc.gov/learningbridges). Before launching  
20 this service, DYCD and DOE reached out to the  
21 existing provider networks to discuss expanding  
22 capacity. And in order to reach additional  
23 organizations, MOCS released A request for  
24 information in July. Along with our partners we have  
25

1 reviewing, inspecting and funding dozens of new  
2 Learning Bridges groups.  
3

4 The base price per participant for the 2020-2021  
5 school year is \$7,812 for DYCD funded learning labs  
6 K-8 programs. The date to respond to that RFI for  
7 providers has been extended to December 5<sup>th</sup> and we  
8 encourage them to continue to express interest in  
9 operating a program. We welcome the Council's  
10 support in that effort.

11 There are currently 406 Learning Bridges programs  
12 operating for early childhood in K-8 including 266  
13 learning lab programs specifically for grades K-8.  
14 Excuse me, there were 406 for early childhood through  
15 8<sup>th</sup> grade. That number will continue to increase.

16 As of today, the city has received nearly 46,000  
17 applications to the centralized DOE Learning Bridges  
18 website from eligible students. Including 28,490  
19 from families who are identified in a priority  
20 category. 39,000 families have been matched to a  
21 Learning Bridges site and once matched, providers  
22 connect with families to identify their blended  
23 learning schedules and gather additional enrollment  
24 information.  
25

1  
2 As we expand eligibility, we anticipate more  
3 parents opting in. We appreciate your help in  
4 sharing these resources with families in your  
5 community. Safety precautions are at the forefront  
6 of our work to protect the health and wellbeing of  
7 the young people and staff. All programs are  
8 following guidance of the CDC, New York State and New  
9 York City Department of Health and DOE public, health  
10 and safety protocols. We have adopted the high five,  
11 wearing masks and daily screening for children staff,  
12 frequent hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting  
13 program spaces and common areas, physical distancing  
14 and maintaining small group size and group stability  
15 throughout the day as much as possible.

16 In addition, the city has made nurses available  
17 to all programs for onsite visits and telehealth from  
18 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.. Program staff have priority for  
19 expedited testing and the city is supporting programs  
20 by providing personal protective equipment whenever  
21 possible.

22 In cases where families are experiencing symptoms  
23 of COVID-19, parents are asked to report the symptoms  
24 of a child or family members to the Learning Bridges  
25 staff and adhere to a 14-day quarantine if necessary.

1  
2 Children who become ill during the day are isolated  
3 and monitored and parents are contacted for early  
4 pickup and referred for testing. Testing and  
5 reporting practices mirror those in place at DOE  
6 schools. Including reporting, closure, contact  
7 tracing and 14-day quarantine protocols for confirmed  
8 cases.

9 Childcare providers notify the New York City  
10 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the New  
11 York State Department of Health immediately upon  
12 being informed of any positive COVID-19 test result  
13 by an employee or a child at their site. Reports of  
14 symptomatic youth or staff confirmed COVID-19 cases  
15 are shared with the return to school situation room.  
16 Their health experts confirm action steps that are  
17 communicated back to the Learning Bridges programs.  
18 We are pleased that the Learning labs programs have  
19 led to new and strengthened partnerships. For  
20 example, the learning lab run by UAU at the West  
21 Bright and Cornerstone on the Northshore of Staten  
22 Island has been able to cultivate a partnership with  
23 the local school PSA team which is also a Beacon  
24 Community Center.

1  
2 Lines of communications have been strengthened  
3 among principals, parent coordinators and teachers  
4 and they share resources that ensure seamless  
5 alignment of academic support and problem solving as  
6 needed. The education coordinator at that site, a  
7 learning lab staff requirement works with the school  
8 day teachers to create refresher packets.

9 Individualized for each student structured around the  
10 unit the youth is studying during school hours.

11 Some learning lab programs have operated in  
12 spaces that have not previously been in use for DYCD  
13 programs, such as libraries including the St. Agnes  
14 Branch on Amsterdam Avenue. The learning lab program  
15 will soon bring a new service to that site through  
16 the after school All Star provider. Learning Labs  
17 are only possible because of a strong team effort.  
18 We appreciate the efforts of our city agency partners  
19 including Department of Health, the Fire Department,  
20 Department of Buildings and other city agencies  
21 helping us to expedite processes to get programs  
22 operating quickly and safely.

23 We are especially grateful to the City Council  
24 for your advocacy and support for this initiative and  
25 for helping to connect your constituents and local



1  
2 community based organizations with the program.

3 Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. I will  
5 now turn it to the Chair's. Chair Rose?

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. I want to thank  
7 you Commissioner Haskell. I know that this has been  
8 a challenge to DYCD and I know that there are many  
9 challenges and obstacles that didn't make this an  
10 easy task to expedite. I am concerned about the  
11 number of - could you just tell me the total number  
12 of applications that you have received for the  
13 services? Parents who want to put their children in  
14 learning lab programs. Could you tell me number? I  
15 think you are muted.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will attempt to keep the  
17 administration unmuted during question and answer as  
18 well.

19 SUSAN HASKELL: Okay, great. Today we received  
20 46,000 applicants from eligible students. Students  
21 who are enrolled in a DOE school and opted for  
22 abundant learning experience.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: And with that, what is the  
24 capacity that you have been able to mass to how many  
25 slots do you have available?

1  
2 SUSAN HASKELL: Currently, we have capacity for  
3 about 40,000 students and we continue to increase  
4 that regularly. Week to week we are adding more  
5 sites.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: And these 40,000 slots, they  
7 have all been matched to a site?

8 SUSAN HASKELL: We have matched 39,000 families  
9 currently to a learning lab site of the 46,000  
10 eligible applicants.

11 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: And so, with them being  
12 matched to a site, what is the criteria? How do you  
13 determine what sites of families will be matched  
14 with?

15 SUSAN HASKELL: At this time, we have made a few  
16 shifts in our policy since the beginning of the  
17 program. At this time, we are matching programs and  
18 sometimes giving them more than option based on  
19 geographic proximity, assuming that that will be the  
20 most convenient site for them. At the same time,  
21 families who may want a different location maybe  
22 because it is close to work or it is close to a  
23 family member who is taking care of the child on the  
24 off days, we are now inviting families to indicate  
25 their preference for the learning lab site.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: And when they are assigned to  
3 these sites, is there an appeal process because I  
4 have gotten numerous calls from constituents that  
5 have been assigned to sites but they are not  
6 convenient. They are often times on Staten Island on  
7 the other side, which would take an hour or more to  
8 get to making it virtually impossible for the family  
9 to utilize that site because they wouldn't be able to  
10 get to work. So, is there an appeal process?

11 SUSAN HASKELL: Yes, there is and I hope that you  
12 will be seeing fewer and fewer of those. As I said,  
13 we are growing week to week. So, we have many more  
14 sites available now than we did initially and again,  
15 I hope that you will hear fewer situations like that.

16 Since we last spoke Chair Rose, I know we have  
17 added new sites to Staten Island but if somebody is  
18 matched to a site and they have one that would be  
19 more convenient for them, we absolutely want to hear  
20 from them. They should email  
21 [learningbridges@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:learningbridges@schools.nyc.gov) and let us know and  
22 we will do our very best to find a better site.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: When the Mayor announced this  
24 program, he announced that there would slots for  
25

1  
2 100,000 young people. What is your timeline for  
3 being able to meet that amount, that goal?

4 SUSAN HASKELL: Well, as I mentioned, we have  
5 capacity currently to serve about 40,000 students. I  
6 think if we capacity currently to serve about 40,000  
7 seats. I think if we met again next week, we would  
8 be pleased to tell you that that number has gone up  
9 again. We made a commitment to serve up to 100,000  
10 people and we are going to continue to meet the need.  
11 I think we are learning more through the application  
12 process about you know, which families are  
13 interested. Where they are. You know, how to site  
14 programs geographically, where the highest demand is  
15 and our commitment absolutely remains to meet the  
16 demand and to that end, we want to encourage you, we  
17 want to encourage families to apply. That will be  
18 you know, our best indication about where to site  
19 programs and we will keep matching families to  
20 programs moving forward. We are pleased that we have  
21 come, you know, we are really making tremendous  
22 progress towards the current demand that we have.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Well, yeah, because you have,  
24 you have met — you have been able to seat 39,000

1  
2 young people and right now, you still have requests  
3 for you know, there was 49,000 requests.

4 SUSAN HASKELL: 46,000 total application.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Right, and what is sort of the  
6 timeline? When do you think you will be able to  
7 accommodate those additional what is it, 7,000 young  
8 people?

9 SUSAN HASKELL: Yeah, I just — you know, we are  
10 just working as fast as we possibly can and again, I  
11 mentioned even this week, you know my colleague  
12 Darryl Rattray in particular has been communicating  
13 with the sites, the existing sites who are signing up  
14 to operate in new spaces, like libraries that we  
15 mentioned or additional sites coming on through the  
16 RFI. In no way are we pausing at all to bring on  
17 sites. We have our pedal to the metal to ramp up  
18 capacity as quickly as possible and so, we are just  
19 going to keep our pedal to the metal and keep working  
20 with our partners.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: What are some of the obstacles  
22 that you have encountered in being able to make these  
23 slots available? You know, what are the obstacles?

24 SUSAN HASKELL: You know, I wouldn't say we have  
25 experienced a tremendous amount of barriers. I mean,

1  
2 to begin with, we I think I mentioned in the  
3 testimony, just being you know, profoundly impressed  
4 by the capacity of New York City's not-for-profit  
5 community to meet the needs under this pandemic, to  
6 shift their focuses and for DYCD, the majority of  
7 programs that came online initially were existing  
8 providers where DYCD has an afterschool contract.  
9 But we knew that that wouldn't get us you know, all  
10 the way to meet the need so we launched this request  
11 for information and we have had many proposals and we  
12 are working through those proposals, looking at the  
13 safety of the physical facility, evaluating that the  
14 site makes sense. That there will be demand in that  
15 area. I am hard pressed to identify a specific  
16 barrier to be honest. I am not sure if any of my  
17 colleagues want to jump in and share some of their  
18 experiences, I welcome that but I think we, you know,  
19 really had a tremendous amount of support.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: We have heard from some  
21 providers that they have had difficulty, especially  
22 if they had programs functioning within schools, that  
23 they are having difficulty accessing space in DOE  
24 schools and that they are having problems accessing  
25 their supplies and their records and things for

1  
2 programs that they did have in schools, like their  
3 compass programs that are not now able to have at  
4 those locations.

5 SUSAN HASKELL: Well, I want to first ask if my  
6 colleague Josh could be unmuted just to weigh in to  
7 that question and then, I will also invite Darryl  
8 Rattray to speak to some of the successes we have had  
9 placing programs in schools.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And as we unmute you Mr.  
11 Wallack, if other members of the Administration, just  
12 so that the host knows if we should unmute you, if  
13 you could raise your hand in Zoom as well if we  
14 should unmute you, we will do that. Thank you.

15 JOSH WALLACK: Okay, I think, can you hear me  
16 now? Terrific, okay. I just want to first of all  
17 thank you all for having us and for giving us the  
18 opportunity to update you on progress and just on  
19 behalf of the Department of Education, thank you for  
20 all of your support as we have rolled this out and  
21 for the spirit with which you approach this and  
22 saying like this is an ambitious effort. We have  
23 tried our best to respond to a pressing need and we  
24 always have in mind that for each family, if they  
25 don't have care on a specific day that is an

1 emergency that takes up – it is their whole world.

2 And so, we keep that in mind even as we are dealing  
3 with big numbers.  
4

5 I think as far as challenges go; I think it has  
6 just been an effort to go as fast as we can. I don't  
7 think there have been particular challenges, other  
8 than to say you know, in areas where we have always  
9 experienced difficulties in finding vacant space  
10 that's suitable for after school and early childhood  
11 programs, those areas of the city do tend to be  
12 tougher. And so, we are working hard to find  
13 partners there that can work with us you know,  
14 particularly I would say Staten Island. Chair Rose  
15 is one of those places as you know and you have been  
16 terrific in working with us on that in Southern  
17 Brooklyn and in our community school district 24 in  
18 Queens in the Flushing's Corona area. Those are  
19 areas of the city where we have always struggled with  
20 school capacity, after school capacity, early  
21 childhood capacity and it is no different here. And  
22 so, in particular if you have leads for us,  
23 organizations that want to work with us, we would be  
24 very happy to hear them.  
25



1  
2 As far as challenges in siting programs in  
3 schools, I think our agencies have been working quite  
4 well together though again, there is capacity issues  
5 in those areas where schools are already struggling,  
6 specially given the social distancing to create space  
7 for these programs. But I will turn it over to  
8 Associate Commissioner Darryl Rattray just to fill in  
9 the gaps there.

10 DARRYL RATTRAY: Good morning Chair Rose. So, to  
11 answer your question around - I will answer two for  
12 one, some of the concerns that you mentioned that  
13 providers are having within schools. I am assuming  
14 and from the feedback that we have received from  
15 providers that that's coming in from the afterschool  
16 world of this, not the learning lab side and from the  
17 afterschool side, imagine that we have gotten up over  
18 90 percent of our school based afterschool programs.

19 Of course, there are some where we are still  
20 dealing with facility logistics, I will call it,  
21 where principals are just ensuring that the right  
22 thing is happening in spaces where the COVID rates  
23 are high within those communities. And we are  
24 working with the nonprofits, we are working with the  
25 principals in the schools to rectify those issues.

1  
2       So, we do expect to get those programs up and  
3 running in person as soon as possible. We are  
4 triaging them on a case by case basis. The one  
5 positive amazing thing is that we do have 11 learning  
6 labs within school buildings and these are locations  
7 where based on the number of students that are in  
8 blended learning, we actually identified spaces  
9 within that school where a nonprofit or existing  
10 nonprofits who have been amazing have not activated  
11 learning labs within those spaces.

12       CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. Learning lab  
13 providers are matched with schools and can only serve  
14 students in the programs who attend those schools.  
15 On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, DYCD notified Learning Lab providers  
16 that their number of matched schools would be  
17 increased allowing additional students to participate  
18 in their Learning Lab programs. In some cases, this  
19 resulted in learning lab programs being matched to  
20 too many schools. How do you plan to address that?

21       DARRYL RATTRAY: Hey guys, if you can unmute  
22 Deputy Commissioner Haskell.

23       SUSAN HASSELL: Chair Rose, you know, I am  
24 pleased to report that we moved away from the initial  
25 policy of matching schools to students. This was a

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great approach to target students with highest need. We have been clear upfront, we want to get this service to the ones who needed it most but then we started looking at where demand was coming in in the applications and the school matching and we realized we could broaden the eligibility and we took that step a couple of weeks ago and at that point, we have been able to offer thousands more people a seat. It is why you see you know, high numbers now in comparison to the applications. That approach really freed us up to reach some of the families who really needed it but who weren't attending schools that had been yet matched to a learning lab program.

So, I think we are going to see a real uptick now that we have you know, initiated that and by starting to send offers to more students and it allowed us to open up the preference to families. So, that now when they are signing up they can make a choice about what's a best fit for them, rather than the city saying you know, this is where you can go.

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: You know this program was more from the REC, the Rec programs and it was supposed to provide you know, the ability for essential workers to go to work and leave their children in a safe

1  
2 environment where they would get educational support  
3 and other enhancement services. And the program, the  
4 Learning Lab program is now just from 8 a.m. to 3  
5 p.m. which is very difficult. It doesn't really  
6 accommodate the needs of working parents and if a  
7 parent has to be at work at 8 or 9, there is no way  
8 that they can you know, take their child to a center  
9 at 8 o'clock and be to work on time and the same on  
10 the back end, being able to pick up their child at 3  
11 o'clock. Is there any plans to look at the timeframe  
12 that the learning labs are actually operational. Is  
13 there some plan to help morph them into the  
14 afterschool programming, so that this actually  
15 becomes a program that works for working parents?  
16 Because as it is, it doesn't address the needs of  
17 essential workers and I know, that's why I whined up  
18 with you know, my grandkids in the afternoon because  
19 there is no way a parent can pick them up at 3  
20 o'clock and be at work.

21 So, is there some sort of - you know, there is  
22 two questions there. Are you going to address those  
23 issues?

24 SUSAN HASKELL: Yeah, I will start; there are a  
25 few things to that and I will welcome DOE to weigh

1  
2 in. I am not going to speak too much to REC's in  
3 particular because it is a really a very different -

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: No, I don't want you to.

5 SUSAN HASKELL: Okay, good but also I am a  
6 lifelong advocate for the 3-6 p.m. period both  
7 because it meets childcare needs that are essential  
8 for working parents and it is really important for  
9 young people's development for them to use those  
10 hours to be engaging in enriching activities.

11 At the same time, we did build up Learning  
12 Bridges and as an alternate to the school day. So,  
13 with a commitment to give them the hours that they  
14 would have had without a pandemic, if there child was  
15 in enrolled in school five days a week.

16 So, that was the model that we launched but we  
17 have heard from many parents and we have heard from  
18 advocates like you that there are still families who  
19 need more support. That was true before the pandemic  
20 and that continues to be true. So, we are exploring  
21 ways and regions or we might be able to expand those  
22 hours either in the morning or in the afternoon to  
23 provide additional support and we look forward to  
24 getting back to you about that.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, many of our UJA  
3 providers have been able to relocate current staff to  
4 work in their Learning Lab program while others had  
5 to hire new staff. However, DOHMH has struggled to  
6 complete the background checks in a timely manner,  
7 causing up to two month delays in the hiring process  
8 for staff members and learning labs. What is DYCD  
9 doing or have you done or is planning to do to assist  
10 DOHMH in expediting the comprehensive background  
11 check process. Will DYCD hold learning lab providers  
12 harmless for under enrollment in the programs due to  
13 not having enough staff cleared to work with children  
14 and youth?

15 SUSAN HASSELL: Yeah, I am going to pull in my  
16 colleague Tracy Caldron if she could be unmuted to  
17 give her responses because she has been working you  
18 know, helping to connect with Department of Health.  
19 And I will just say while she is getting unmuted, it  
20 is not really funny but sometimes I have to laugh to  
21 myself, when the new federal background clearance  
22 guidelines came back last September, I was confident  
23 this would be the biggest obstacle to our providers  
24 to bringing childcare program as they had in the past  
25

1  
2 and then March 2020 hit and for sure that was not the  
3 biggest obstacle hitting childcare.

4 So, we have been in tune to that need since  
5 before the pandemic and maybe Tracy could speak a  
6 little bit more about – Tracy, if you want to raise  
7 your hand, maybe that will help them find you to  
8 unmute.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We are having an issue; it is  
10 not unmuting. So, we are sending an unmute, you have  
11 to accept the unmute request. So, there is a delay  
12 in unmuting so if members could use the raise hand  
13 function in Zoom if you are going to be answering  
14 questions, that we can do that in advance. Just hit  
15 unmute. Okay and I think Ms. Caldron is unmuted.

16 TRACY CALDRON: Thank you. So, yeah, so due to a  
17 regulation, a federal regulation change, there has  
18 been a slowdown in the clearance process and we have  
19 experienced that when it first was enacted. But to  
20 our knowledge, currently there hasn't been any impact  
21 to the learning labs due to the clearance process or  
22 the new clearance process and we welcome and invite  
23 you to let us know about providers and programs that  
24 have communicated that there has been an impact to  
25 their particular programs.

1  
2 But we are not aware of any impact or any  
3 programs that have been inhibited to provide services  
4 to any learning lab or learning bridges participants  
5 but initially when the law was enacted, we provided  
6 support, resource, we had trainings to support our  
7 programs and our providers to become knowledgeable  
8 about the process and so, we did initially provide  
9 that support to help aid in speeding up the  
10 clearances on our side.

11 SUSAN HASSELL: I will just add to that that the  
12 Learning Labs program you know, are operating in a  
13 very different way than our community based  
14 organizations are used to operating where they really  
15 manage at the local level. Their direct outreach to  
16 families and their enrollment processes, so this is a  
17 much more centralized approach than there used to.

18 So, I think to Tracy's point, we are not aware of  
19 any young person program who couldn't be served  
20 because we didn't have enough cleared staff, even  
21 though we know staff clearing can be a barrier but we  
22 are funding programs Learning Lab programs the same  
23 way we fund other youth services programs in any time  
24 at DYCD. You have a contract value; you provide the  
25



1  
2 service you are contracted for and then you are  
3 reimbursed through your approved expenses.

4 I welcome my colleague Jagdeen Phanor if she  
5 wants to add anything to that.

6 JAGDEEN PHANOR: Alright thank you Susan, just  
7 repeat one more time, I got distracted with an  
8 incoming text. What is it that you wanted me to  
9 cover specifically?

10 SUSAN HASKELL: Chair Rose, your question was  
11 about I think, was about reimbursing providers as  
12 they continue to ramp up their enrollment.

13 JAGDEEN PHANOR: So, thank you, thank you for  
14 clarifying. Good morning Chair Rose. One of the  
15 things that we want to stress is that of the  
16 approximate 170 contracts that we have, currently  
17 almost 119 of them have existing base contracts and  
18 so, what my team has been doing on a continuous basis  
19 is if a provider reaches out and is having cash flow  
20 issues, we are assessing what their base contracts  
21 looked like before contracts are registered. So,  
22 that we can make sure that providers are getting the  
23 financial assistance that is needed.

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, because – so you are  
25 saying that DYCD will compensate Learning Lab

1  
2 providers for the full amount of their FY21 contracts  
3 regardless of their daily attendance at their  
4 programs and when would they be able to expect  
5 compensation and reimbursement?

6 JAGDEEN PHANOR: So, just to reiterate again,  
7 reimbursement as contracts get registered, we are  
8 definitely reimbursing. If before registration  
9 happens and a provider needs assistance, cash flow  
10 assistance, we are doing contract by contract  
11 assessment and if they have a base contract, we are  
12 tapping in to make sure that they can access some of  
13 that funding up front while they wait for their new  
14 contracts to be registered.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: I have taken a lot of time and  
16 I want to be fair to my Co-Chair, so I will come  
17 back. I will ask other questions; I have a lot.  
18 Chair Rosenthal?

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much Chair  
20 Rose. Yeah, there are a lot of question, I really  
21 appreciate the ones you have already asked and I have  
22 a few follow up questions to those. Let's just start  
23 with the last point. I think what Chair Rose was  
24 asking was a little different than the answer, I  
25 think.

1  
2       So, let's say a contract is approved for a  
3 provider and I understand that the reimbursement will  
4 happen as soon as the invoice is sent in and you are  
5 helping to smooth things over, which is great. I  
6 think the question is and especially because the way  
7 you have talked about the funding is per person. The  
8 question is, is the reimbursement per person or is it  
9 for the entire value of a full program? In other  
10 words, if the program promises 30 seats but only 20  
11 kids show up, it could be different kids but only 20  
12 kids show up every single day, will the provider be  
13 paid for 30 children or 20 children?

14       JAGDEEN PHANOR: So, I am going to ask that you  
15 unmute Nevita and I am going to start the response to  
16 your specific question. Providers, listen, we follow  
17 the providers lead. The provider is going to send,  
18 they have access if they have a contract, they have  
19 access to their entire contract amount. We are  
20 reimbursing based on what they submit as  
21 expenditures.

22       So, I think what I want to stress, it is the  
23 provider who is going to kind of lead that charge,  
24 right and submit what is needed in terms of  
25 expenditures, right. The PPE that we mentioned which

1  
2 was approximately 7,800 right, includes several  
3 different things. Several different components and  
4 so, as providers submit their reimbursement and their  
5 ask, we are reimbursing and I think to answer your  
6 larger question, yes, we have all intention and we  
7 are committed to paying providers for these slots and  
8 seats that they have been contracted for. I don't  
9 know Nevita if you want to add anything to that.

10 NEVITA BAILEY: So, good morning, this is Nevita,  
11 hi Chair Rosenthal. So, I just want to expand on  
12 that. Reimbursement is not based on performance and  
13 so, I think your original question is, is this a  
14 performance based contract and where reimbursement  
15 will be based on performance.

16 Reimbursement is based on what is submitted in an  
17 invoice as Jagdeen indicated. And so, providers will  
18 not be held to account regarding under enrollment if  
19 they are unable to fully enroll their participants.  
20 Along as their expenses are on the invoice are  
21 eligible consistent with our fiscal manual, they will  
22 be reimbursed. So, I just want to make sure that is  
23 clear. That is not tied to reimbursement for  
24 providers. I hope that answers your question.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Totally, that was so  
3 clear. Thank you because I am hearing from providers  
4 that yeah, their overhead is the same whether or not  
5 a child shows up but you could see that fewer PPE you  
6 know is used – okay, great. Thank you that was very  
7 clear. I am going to go back to the top just for a  
8 second and just as a baseline, Deputy Commissioner  
9 Haskell, are you using, is the City using in its  
10 testimony and its answers, Learning Lab, Learning  
11 Bridges sort of interchangeable or fused together.

12 So, in other words, like what we just discussed  
13 about reimbursement. Can I assume that is true for  
14 Learning Bridges and Learning Labs or are your  
15 answers only in regards to Learning Labs?

16 SUSAN HASSELL: That is a great question. I am  
17 going to welcome Josh to weigh in. DYCD is you now,  
18 contracting the Learning Labs part K-8. Learning  
19 Bridges is the whole initiative. Because this is a  
20 Youth Services hearing, we are focused on Learning  
21 Labs and I apologize, I sometimes use the term  
22 interchangeably with all the supports we have with  
23 DOE and our partnership here, we are able to answer a  
24 lot of questions about the Learning Bridges  
25 Initiative overall.

1  
2 So, thank you for clarifying for that for people  
3 who are listening as well. I have been using those  
4 sometimes interchangeably. Josh, I welcome you to  
5 reply to the reimbursement question.

6 JOSH WALLACK: Sure, I appreciate it. I am  
7 jumping in whenever there is a difference and so, in  
8 this case, it is the same. We also pay for the  
9 capacity, recognizing that you know, as you mentioned  
10 Chair Rosenthal, providers have fixed costs, atop in  
11 a classroom and we consider there is a partnership  
12 and so, you know, it is incumbent upon us to help  
13 make sure that families connect to these sites to get  
14 the care they need and for us to make sure that the  
15 organizations have what they need to run a quality,  
16 safe and healthy program for them.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Fantastic, thank you.  
18 These are a tiny bit random but as I said, I am just  
19 asking follow up questions to the ones that Council  
20 Member Rose asked. I am wondering about the  
21 applicants who turned down their placement in  
22 September because perhaps the placement was an hour  
23 away and so, it just didn't help them.

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2 Are you aggressively going back to those  
3 applicants now that you have more sites to offer them  
4 a slot?

5 SUSAN HASKELL: Well, I want to say that yes,  
6 there is the opportunity as you mentioned to come  
7 back into the portal and reup your application, pick,  
8 select a different site and yes, we are working on  
9 outreach strategies constantly. We appreciate your  
10 support with that. We are looking to different  
11 audiences we need to communicate with to say, this  
12 resource is still available. We want you to apply.  
13 If you need it, we know how critical it is to your  
14 day to day. So, yes, to both.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Well, yeah, I mean,  
16 wouldn't it just be a simple automatic almost. You  
17 could do it through the application process. You  
18 could see who applied, didn't accept their placement  
19 and therefore, automatically a letter goes out saying  
20 please reapply?

21 SUSAN HASKELL: We can do that. We will keep  
22 outreach, we really want to focus - we are not sure  
23 we have all the demand out there, we probably don't.  
24 We need to communicate with those families that have  
25 already applied and families who haven't yet applied

1  
2 and let them know that the resource is available. I  
3 hear what you are saying.

4 JOSH WALLACK: We are actually about to go out  
5 this week with notices to families that have applied,  
6 just letting them know where there are new  
7 opportunities. Just to your point Chair Rosenthal.  
8 So, that will happen in the next few days and we will  
9 continue to do that. We are just upgrading these  
10 systems as we go and making more and possible with  
11 each week. So, thank you for the suggestion.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Makes sense. You  
13 mentioned in your testimony that a library in my  
14 district, the St. Agnes Branch, will soon be open as  
15 I think a Learning Lab. I am wondering when would  
16 applicants know about that and seats and stuff like  
17 that?

18 SUSAN HASSELL: Yeah, without getting too much  
19 into specifics, I am not sure how many seats they  
20 have but the process and Josh, correct me if I am  
21 wrong is, the minute a site comes online, we notify  
22 DOE to dig into the application pool and notify all  
23 eligible families who are in that area that they can  
24 connect with this provider and offer them the contact  
25 information. And in fact, if they have applied and



1  
2 they are a priority in a priority group, we are going  
3 to let them know you have priority for this seat and  
4 we are going to let the provider know that to.

5 JOSH WALLACK: Right, we put out notice as soon  
6 as a new offer – as soon as a new site comes online,  
7 we let eligible families in the area know and we make  
8 matches weekly. So, we are on a weekly pace.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Wow.

10 SUSAN HASKELL: And we add those sites to the  
11 website. So, they will be visible to the public on  
12 the DOE website.

13 DARRYL RATTRAY: And just adding that the St.  
14 Agnes Library will have 105 seats.

15 SUSAN HASKELL: Nice.

16 DARRYL RATTRAY: Operated by afterschool stars.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: So, that's a lot of  
18 seats. Very exciting, it is a big library, that  
19 makes a lot of sense and also confirming that the  
20 library is not open to the public. So, it will only  
21 be used for this program and is the program from 8 to  
22 3 or 8 to 6 because the name of the provider includes  
23 the words, Afterschool All Stars?

24 DARRYL RATTRAY: That's correct. All Learning  
25 Lab programs are open from 8 to 3 p.m.. Coincidentally

1  
2 the providers name is Afterschool All Stars but  
3 that's their official provider name. And double  
4 confirming your point that yes, libraries are closed  
5 to the public and we are working with the library  
6 systems as well as the nonprofits that will be  
7 operating out of the libraries for proper signage  
8 because of course, folks are going to see activity  
9 and try to walk in.

10 So, we will be sure to proper signage out front  
11 on the entrances as well.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, terrific. A lot of  
13 families sort of around there who will need service.  
14 You know, the answers I am hearing, I think - so my  
15 question is, would you be able to send the Council  
16 sort of a chart of by Council District, how many  
17 applications and how many filled? And the reason I  
18 ask that question and I sort of hear Josh in your  
19 mind, thinking, well, it gets updated every week, so  
20 how could we do that and I hear that but my  
21 frustration is that I am hearing different things  
22 from different people. One provider told me that  
23 they tried to apply but were told that there was no  
24 demand in my district. And it sounds like that  
25 wasn't true or else you wouldn't have set up 101 seat

1  
2 provider. Is there anyway to do that in a point of  
3 time or – and the reason would be of course, we send  
4 out weekly emails and if there is space available, I  
5 would love to be able to tell my eblast list that  
6 that is the case and maybe flyer some of the low  
7 income buildings around me.

8 SUSAN HASKELL: Yes, we can definitely get you a  
9 list of programs by Council District, absolutely.

10 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: That's terrific, although  
11 I can go on your site and pull out mine but more  
12 importantly for the information of the Council  
13 Member, maybe I don't know, maybe in your high  
14 priority areas, so Council Members could know to  
15 reach out if there are applicants that haven't gotten  
16 a site yet. So, in other words, the delta, to know  
17 the delta between those who applied and those who got  
18 seats.

19 SUSAN HASKELL: Yeah, we will work with DOE on  
20 that absolutely.

21 JOSH WALLACK: Yeah, I think we can – let us look  
22 at what data we are able to pull and how quickly but  
23 I understand what you are looking for and I think we  
24 would share that information just in the spirit of  
25 trying to work together to fill gaps where there are

1  
2 gaps. So, I appreciate that. So, yes, let us look  
3 into that and we will get back to you very shortly.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And obviously the date  
5 would have to be front and center, yeah. Alright,  
6 great, thank you and then I am wondering in your  
7 testimony you mentioned that Learning Labs and  
8 Bridges are basically free childcare options for  
9 children from 3K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade on days when they  
10 are scheduled for remote learning.

11 I am wondering should the schools close down and  
12 perhaps you already answered this but should the  
13 schools close for any reason, will the Learning Lab  
14 and Learning Bridge sites remain open?

15 SUSAN HASSELL: Yes and I did say that in the  
16 testimony and we have you know; we have been  
17 preparing as we watch the news and we see that there  
18 is some uptick in the cases. We have been preparing  
19 providers. We sent an email out to the K to 8 groups  
20 on Friday, just saying listen, if schools are to shut  
21 down, please remain open, continue to serve your  
22 families and expect that you will have families  
23 asking for more days of the week. So, we want to -  
24 the way the data is right now, it looks like in many  
25

1 cases, maybe in most cases, we would be able to  
2 accommodate additional days.

3 Families will need to communicate back to the  
4 provider to let them know that they are interested  
5 and allow the provider to you know, set up a new  
6 schedule based on probably families who will have  
7 more need and potentially families who don't want to  
8 come in person under those circumstances and we will  
9 be prepared for both.

10 So, yeah, we will be open and we will be trying  
11 to do more to meet the childcare needs if they aren't  
12 in person on some school days.

13 JOSH WALLACK: We reached out to preschool  
14 providers as well late last week just to also let  
15 them know that the plan is that they would be open if  
16 schools should close.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Got it and I assume you  
18 are tracking the positive rate of COVID at each one  
19 of the sites on a regular basis and following the  
20 same rules that DOE does where if it hits a certain  
21 number, you close down the site, great.

22 JOSH WALLACK: So, just to say, sorry to  
23 interrupt but I just want to clarify. The community  
24 based organizations that run preschool Learning  
25

1  
2 Bridges and 3K and PreK, we are looking at the  
3 statistics of course but they will remain open even  
4 if the citywide positivity rate goes above 3 percent,  
5 just to say.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Right, if there is a  
7 specific site.

8 JOSH WALLACK: Yes, all of those cases would be  
9 reported into the situation room. They are all part  
10 of the same rules. There it is not about a  
11 percentage, it's about a number of cases that are not  
12 linked to one another. That to the Department of  
13 Health and Mental Hygiene and our health experts,  
14 means that there is a reason to shut the site  
15 completely.

16 So, those cases are reported as I think Susan  
17 Haskell said in her testimony into the same system as  
18 the schools and are treated the same way. Luckily,  
19 we have seen very, very few cases in Learning Bridges  
20 sites so far, either on the preschool or school age  
21 side. So, that's great news.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Great, that's impressive.  
23 Alright, my last set of questions for this round have  
24 to do with the students with disabilities.

1  
2       So, are seats available? Are Learning Lab seats  
3 available in terms of you know, actually reality for  
4 D75 students, students with IEP's, yes or no? And do  
5 you have numbers, do you have any numbers around  
6 that?

7       SUSAN HASKELL: Yes, yes, we are open for  
8 students with disabilities. I appreciate that  
9 question. On a personal note, I am so grateful  
10 everyday that my children are grown and no longer  
11 school age. I appreciate the point that you and  
12 Chair Rose made earlier about how challenging this  
13 is, especially on moms. My colleagues, you know, you  
14 see the kids sometimes coming into the work calls and  
15 it is a great interruption but the reality of trying  
16 to balance is unbelievable and my own student who got  
17 specialized services since age 2, I can imagine how  
18 difficult this is for families.

19       So, it is especially hard for families of  
20 students with disabilities or special needs and we  
21 have made matches. So, 9,000 of the students that we  
22 talked about being matched to a program are students  
23 with IEP's and we absolutely know of cases that have  
24 been shared with me by specific providers of services  
25 going well for students with disabilities. At the

1  
2 same time, you know, we are ramping up a system which  
3 is, you know, meant as an alternative to the school  
4 day during blended learning. And the Learning Labs  
5 programs just don't have the same level of supports  
6 that a school has through the Office of School Sports  
7 and Office of Special Education.

8       So, there are cases coming to our attention and  
9 we will continue to work to meet the needs of those  
10 families. We have individualized support. My  
11 colleague Tracy Caldron, I know Department of  
12 Education because very often we are working together  
13 on what we can do to improve accommodations. We are  
14 also looking at whether there are sites where we  
15 could add more staff so that you know, we built our  
16 program off the childcare ratios 1 to 10, 1 to 15 and  
17 that's not adequate in some cases for young people.  
18 So, we know we have more work to do with this but we  
19 also know that we are seeing many successes for  
20 students with disabilities, so we just have to keep  
21 this as a priority and we will continue to do that.

22       CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Okay, it is great to hear  
23 9,000 kids have been with IEP's have been matched.  
24 Can I assume that they were matched either in schools



1  
2 where there is space for it or it was situations  
3 where they don't need a para, these kids?

4 SUSAN HASSELL: Yeah, it may have been a  
5 situation where they don't need a para. I think we  
6 have programs that are actually you know, finding a  
7 way to provide para support as well and I will ask  
8 Josh if he wants to add anything to this but we are  
9 not specifically matching students to school based  
10 programs.

11 And so, most of the examples that I know are  
12 actually in our community based programs. I know  
13 SOBRO Coalition for Hispanic Family Services,  
14 Childrens Aid, these are some of the programs that we  
15 have been working with directly to help place  
16 students. There hasn't been a specific effort to  
17 match them to the school programs.

18 JOSH WALLACK: I think - oh, I am sorry.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Nope, I was just making  
20 it up given that one of the reasons for not matching  
21 was space but please, yeah.

22 JOSH WALLACK: No, I think that's just right. I  
23 mean, we are looking at which ever setting can  
24 support students with disabilities. We are finding a  
25 lot of community based organizations are stepping up

1  
2 and saying that they can do so. I do want to just be  
3 you know, I think as we said, we acknowledge we have  
4 more work to do here. I think it is a top priority  
5 for us to be able to serve all the students with  
6 disabilities that need Learning Bridges on days that  
7 they are not in person. And we at the Department of  
8 Education have been working very hard with DYCD and  
9 our special education office is deeply involved in  
10 trying to make sure that improve these services as  
11 quickly as we can and trying to get services into the  
12 community based organizations or the schools for that  
13 matter for kids who need them.

14 It is you know; we appreciate sort of the  
15 attention here and just agree that it is a real  
16 priority and that we have more to do but we are  
17 making some progress as Susan pointed out. We do  
18 have thousands of kids that are in sites and getting  
19 the services they need. We just have to keep  
20 pushing.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I mean, it would be great  
22 if you could actually be specific. So, how many of  
23 the 9,000 need para's and yeah, and I guess it would  
24 be how many of the 9 - first of all, how many apply?  
25 And then how many got a placement?

1  
2 JOSH WALLACK: Yeah, we don't have those numbers  
3 now. I will say, I think we are having trouble in  
4 particular replicating that para service that you are  
5 referring to. That is a challenge for us. We are  
6 trying to add more staff to you know, give better  
7 services. We want to improve. Let us come back to  
8 you with the numbers. We are happy to you know.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: For sure, but so, have  
10 you negotiated - obvious, so you negotiate a contract  
11 with a provider and obviously the providers that have  
12 the capacity to have additional staff and you know,  
13 take D75 kids or someone who needs a  
14 paraprofessional, wouldn't that contract by  
15 definition have more - have a higher reimbursement  
16 level because they have a higher number of staff?

17 SUSAN HASKELL: Well, at this point, we have a  
18 base contract and all of our programs are funded at  
19 that base contract level. And I think, you know, I  
20 want to give credit to all our providers really  
21 working with families to make accommodations whenever  
22 possible.

23 Sometimes providers themselves are engaged in  
24 this work you know, outside of the Learning Labs  
25 program so they have a higher level of you know

1  
2 resources within the agency that maybe they can pull  
3 in or they just have expertise and they are better  
4 equipped to meet the needs. So, we are looking at  
5 adding resources potentially for additional staff.  
6 At this point, we have a single model and we are  
7 doing our best within that model but we are exploring  
8 whether additional resources could move us further  
9 toward fully meeting the need.

10 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, I mean, let the  
11 record show the answer to that question was no and  
12 that, you know of course you are thinking about it  
13 but the answer is no.

14 So, in other words, up to now, there is sort of  
15 no you know, a provider would have to pull from other  
16 resources if they were going to take a student and if  
17 they had to provide a para. I mean, it is just an  
18 important distinction to make.

19 SUSAN HASKELL: You are right, we did not set up  
20 a program that was you know, fully equipped. Again,  
21 designed with the full set of resources that are  
22 available through the Department of Education and  
23 that's the challenge that we are going to continue to  
24 push through.

1  
2 JOSH WALLACK: And that's why the partners have  
3 been so important. I mean I think we are - you know,  
4 this is a top area of focus for us right now. You  
5 know, literally today and tomorrow and the next day,  
6 we hear you loud and clear and we have heard from  
7 families as well. We are working right now with our  
8 special education office to try to find solutions  
9 here that might be possible.

10 So, I think we understand it is a priority. Let  
11 us work a little bit more with our partners at DYCD  
12 and we can update you in the days to come about our  
13 progress. But again, it is a real focus for us and  
14 we really hear you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, I will be - well, I  
16 will get to budget questions in a minute. So, I am  
17 just going to read a couple questions. I think you  
18 already answered them but I just want to make sure I  
19 heard the right answer, heard the accurate answer.  
20 So, how many requests has DYCD received from parents  
21 or programs or accommodations or supports including  
22 the paraprofessional support for students with  
23 disabilities?

24 SUSAN HASSELL: I don't know if we have that  
25 specific number. I can call on my colleagues - yeah,

1  
2 I don't think we have that data. You know, I have  
3 one colleague here who I know has been doing some  
4 individualized supports and she could talk about the  
5 cases that she has been working with. I don't think  
6 it would paint the full picture that you are looking  
7 for. So, we can you know again, to point, let us  
8 regroup on this and try to help give you what you are  
9 looking for to get you the information you need.

10 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Right, I mean, if the  
11 answer really is don't know, that means that in your  
12 tracking system, you don't have a box check here for  
13 will need a paraprofessional. Will need additional  
14 support. You are not even asking? Like if you don't  
15 know, that means you are not collecting the data  
16 because you are so good on giving us the information  
17 about other data. So, does that mean you are not  
18 asking the question in the application is my question  
19 to you.

20 JOSH WALLACK: We are starting to collect the  
21 data. I think that again, I think some of this is as  
22 you pointed out, we understand it is a real priority  
23 which is why we have worked so hard and accelerated  
24 to offer slots to kids. And that said, I think we  
25 have more work to do on our side to collect this data

1  
2 and to give you sort of a full response on what our  
3 approach will be. We do know which students have  
4 IEP's. We know that and then we work with the  
5 program to make sure that they are able to meet the  
6 services that are mandated on the IEP. What we don't  
7 have right here and now is the number of students  
8 with an IEP in which cases, the mandated services  
9 require a para.

10 So, that's the breakdown that we are missing but  
11 I think what you are pointing out, the larger issue  
12 is, do we have a comprehensive approach to make sure  
13 that in every case, we are able to get through our  
14 Special Education office, the services that that  
15 child needs to sort of thrive in Learning Bridges. I  
16 think there we have more to go and I think we just  
17 need to keep you posted in the next couple of weeks  
18 about how we mend that.

19 SUSAN HASSELL: Yeah, yeah, and to agonize that  
20 many, many young people who apply will be  
21 successfully served in the mainstream Learning Labs  
22 programs and we do say, if you need additional  
23 support, here is where to reach out and that's where  
24 we are getting that individualized attention that  
25 Tracy has been working on.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, that's confusing.

3

So, Josh when you say you know how many kids have

4

IEP's, that's the 9,000 number?

5

JOSH WALLACK: Yes.

6

CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And what you don't know

7

is how many people applied. You know that 9,000 have

8

been served.

9

JOSH WALLACK: Right, that's in the larger, that

10

9,000 is part of the larger number that we led with.

11

So, most of them are being served, yes.

12

CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Well, you don't know how

13

many applied.

14

JOSH WALLACK: We know that most of the children

15

that are in priority categories that applied are

16

being served. So, they are part of that larger

17

group.

18

CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, it would be helpful

19

to know that number and to think hard about that

20

number and then I guess my question would be, I think

21

you said Tracy might know this answer. How many

22

parents then because it would be on the parent

23

proactively reach out and ask for additional support.

24

What's the number of people who have reached out?

25

What's the number of people who have gotten that



1  
2 support? And I mentioned that it is proactive  
3 because that means a parent has to assume, has to  
4 know that those supports are not being given, even  
5 though they were given at the REC center.

6 So, you know that exists. You are going to get  
7 back to me with those numbers?

8 SUSAN HASKELL: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Okay and shout, I forgot.  
10 Do you know how many requests for paraprofessionals  
11 or other sports have been granted?

12 SUSAN HASKELL: No but I think you know, you are  
13 directing us to an area where we are like to Josh's  
14 point, we are putting more attention as we have you  
15 know, gotten some traction with this program.  
16 Learned a little bit more about what the special  
17 needs are of our applicants and we will get back to  
18 you with more information.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And actually, Josh in  
20 your answer or both of you, your answers have seemed  
21 to focus on Learning Bridges for the youngest  
22 children. Do you answers apply both to Bridges and  
23 Labs?

24 JOSH WALLACK: Yes, absolutely. We have  
25 responded to needs in both programs and are working

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to focus even more on that. And I will add, I think this is another case where we want to work on the overall approach and also, we would like to partner with you because really, each parent that we have heard from we have responded to and supported. And we want to have a systemic approach so it is more automatic but also, if you are aware of particular cases where folks are having challenges, we want to respond as quickly as possible.

CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Josh, that's quite an assertion and I am not going to dwell on it.

JOSH WALLACK: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I am just going to go on but everyone who has reached out has been accommodated but I asked a minute ago, how many have reached out, how many have been accommodated. So, I don't - I hear you, most who have reached out have gotten accommodated. I just, we need to be careful about assertions.

JOSH WALLACK: Understood. We will show our work. We need to come back to you, I get it.

CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I appreciate that and specifically in the application process, does the

1  
2 city, is there a place for families to request the  
3 additional supports?

4 SUSAN HASSELL: There is a contact for outreach  
5 to walk through that process.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: But there is nothing in  
7 the initial application that says, I am sorry, I  
8 think I already asked this. But there is nothing in  
9 the – I understand there is a phone number if someone  
10 can be proactive but is there a box, I am sorry, I  
11 think I already asked that question.

12 JOSH WALLACK: No, no, there is not a box on the  
13 application but the reason for that is that when we  
14 get an application, since these children are all  
15 enrolled in New York City public schools, we match  
16 their application to data that we already have about  
17 the student and so, we know whether they have an IEP.  
18 And so, we don't have to ask the family to reinput  
19 data that they have already given us. We are trying  
20 to do less and less of that.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: For sure.

22 JOSH WALLACK: So, we just capture enough  
23 information to know which student we are dealing with  
24 and then we try to do the best we can with the  
25 information we have and then there is an additional

1  
2 email address if families want to reach out with us  
3 with more information or have issues or questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, I mean the only  
5 flaw in that approach and I respect that. I mean,  
6 that says volumes about your data system, that's  
7 great but for it doesn't answer the question really  
8 for the Learning Bridges because I would imagine many  
9 of those kids are not enrolled in a school yet.  
10 Maybe, right?

11 JOSH WALLACK: Oh, in preschool programs, they  
12 would be. As soon as they are in – if they are  
13 enrolled in 3K or PreK, and that's –

14 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I'm just saying there are  
15 those who are not enrolled in 3K and PreK. That's  
16 all.

17 JOSH WALLACK: Got it.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And that might be the way  
19 to ask the question. If you are not currently  
20 enrolled in a school, please check here. If you will  
21 need additional supports for you child.

22 JOSH WALLACK: Yeah, I think that's important and  
23 I think we both have the same goal here and forgive  
24 me for just clarifying but I do want to make sure as  
25 folks are watching that they understand clearly only

1  
2 children who are already enrolled in a Department of  
3 Education School or program in blended learning are  
4 eligible for Learning Bridges.

5 So, in order for a preschool age child to apply,  
6 they have to be in 3K or PreK and if they are, then  
7 they are in our data systems and we know whether they  
8 have a need, an IEP.

9 So, just so we are clear, at this point, if folks  
10 are not enrolled in a DOE school or program, they are  
11 not eligible for a Learning Bridges spot and that's  
12 just important to clarify for those who may be  
13 watching.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you. I really  
15 appreciate that clarification. In other words you  
16 could be income eligible but not enrolled in DOE.  
17 Perhaps enrolled in a religious school and you are  
18 not eligible. How about Charter kids?

19 JOSH WALLACK: They are not eligible at this  
20 time.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Very helpful, thank you.  
22 Okay, quick, I am going to ask you just – I am going  
23 to go back to funding. Do the Learning Labs and  
24 Bridges serve families in homeless shelters or  
25

1  
2 homeless hotels and how do those families find out  
3 about the program?

4 SUSAN HASKELL: We have been again working  
5 closely with our partners at DOE including the  
6 students in temporary housing, Office for Students in  
7 Temporary Housing. They have done direct and  
8 specific outreach to DOE enrolled families  
9 participating in blended learning to let them know  
10 about this option. In some cases, we have you know,  
11 generated letters, matching them to sites. You know,  
12 even before an expression of interest or at least  
13 alerting them to the ability to enroll in a site.  
14 So, we have been very targeted toward our homeless  
15 students in terms of making families aware that this  
16 opportunity exists and making matches to programs.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Right, and the family  
18 would have to have a computer in order to do this  
19 obviously, right to apply?

20 SUSAN HASKELL: That's right, the application is  
21 online, yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: They would have to have  
23 internet wherever they are.

24 JOSH WALLACK: Families can also use 311. So, if  
25 they don't have access to internet but have access to

1  
2 a phone, they can call 311 and apply that way and we  
3 have also been sending offers you know, directly to  
4 sites. You know, so that families have offers ready  
5 to go again, without internet.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I am glad you are again,  
7 saying this for the public. So, it is really helpful  
8 to know. Do you have a total budget? Is there a  
9 number in the city's budget for Learning Labs and for  
10 Learning Bridges? But let's start with Learning  
11 Labs. Does DYCD have a line in the budget that says,  
12 amount for Learning Labs?

13 SUSAN HASSELL: Yeah, I am going to throw this to  
14 my physical team if we could unmute Jagdeen Phanor  
15 and Nevita Bailey and just, while they are doing  
16 that, I will note it is a rolling initiative. In  
17 other words, we continue to add sites and I see they  
18 are unmuted now, so I will let them take it.

19 JAGDEEN PHANOR: Thank you Susan. Look, we know  
20 that we have a rate and we have a targeted number of  
21 kids that we want to serve and it could change based  
22 on COVID and school enrollment. However, we are  
23 still working with the state on funding eligibility  
24 and don't have a breakdown of the exact amount of  
25 funding type yet. What I can say to you is through

1  
2 the contract negotiations that we have done thus far,  
3 we have approximately or have obligated approximately  
4 \$133 million towards the Learning Labs Initiative and  
5 again, I want to reiterate what Susan is saying that  
6 it is a rolling obviously based on need and as we  
7 work through the details on the backend, we are going  
8 to be committed to reimbursing.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I understand. So,  
10 funding for this program, how much is city funded?  
11 How much is state funded?

12 JAGDEEN PHANOR: That's so, I am going to  
13 reiterate again, that's what we are working behind  
14 the scenes on making sure we still are in  
15 conversations with the state and we don't have that  
16 funding type detail yet. What we do know is based on  
17 what we have negotiated thus far, we are at about  
18 \$133 million. When we get the details behind how it  
19 is going to be funded, whether it is city funding,  
20 whether it is state, we will give you more clarity  
21 but we are still working behind to the scenes to  
22 flesh out those details.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: So, in the November plan,  
24 when I look at the DYCD budget, hypothetically, no,  
25



1  
2 there would be a line that says \$133 million in  
3 expenses?

4 JAGDEEN PHANOR: So, you won't see expenses  
5 because they are not all incurred yet. Look, we are  
6 working very closely -

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Actual versus budget. I  
8 am just saying in the November plan, which is budget,  
9 are you going to have a budgeted amount in there?

10 JAGDEEN PHANOR: Sorry to interrupt you Chair.  
11 It is our intention to work very closely with OMB and  
12 our other partners to make sure that we can solidify  
13 the funding. Again, what we are trying to do behind  
14 the scenes is work with the state on what funding is  
15 going to be available from their end and looking at  
16 several different pots to see where this funding is  
17 going to materialize. What I can say is, that it is  
18 not going to impact the way that we reimburse our  
19 providers. We will not leave them in a ditch. We  
20 are going to figure it out but I don't have the level  
21 of detail that you are looking for, which we normally  
22 have and we are going to get you that information as  
23 soon as possible.

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Right, no, actually I  
25 understand that. If you can't show where the

1  
2 revenues are coming from, you hold off on showing it  
3 in the budget as an expense on quite a few programs.  
4 And so, you wait until you get the revenue in and  
5 then you show both.

6 I understand that but it does mean that at some  
7 point there will be city funds needed to cover costs  
8 obviously and hopefully, well, you know, stop holding  
9 back. It is what \$2 billion and step up to help fund  
10 this program.

11 JAGDEEN PHANOR: From your mouth to God's ears.  
12 We hope the same.

13 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I hoping they are hearing  
14 me when I am saying that.

15 JAGDEEN PHANOR: So, am I.

16 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Okay, hang on one second,  
17 I have a constituent at the door. So, this timing is  
18 good. Council Member Rose, Chair Rose, I am going to  
19 push it back to you. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you so much Chair  
21 Rosenthal. I was just wondering to piggyback on  
22 Chair Rosenthal's. Does DOE provide any funding in  
23 DYCD's budget for Learning Labs and if so, how much?  
24 And what funding category is it coming from?

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SUSAN HASKELL: Jagdeen, I will turn to you for that.

JAGDEEN PHANOR: So, were you asking specifically for DOE because you mentioned -

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Yes, yes.

JAGDEEN PHANOR: So, I think that's Josh because I can't speak to DOE's budget.

SUSAN HASKELL: I don't think we have funds from DOE in the DYCD budget right now.

JAGDEEN PHANOR: So, I thought you were asking for the funding in terms of Learning Bridge and where we are in terms of obligation, so excuse me for that. No, nothing is coming from DOE into DYCD's budget currently, no.

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, is that a possible funding stream? Is that one of the streams that we are looking at in terms of the \$132 million or more?

JAGDEEN PHANOR: Currently, no, it is more of a revenue situation that we are looking at. Definitely not from DOE.

SUSAN HASKELL: Gosh, you got some money you want to throw at us.

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2 JOSH WALLACK: I was going to say, we are all in  
3 the same boat here. We all are looking hard at ways  
4 to fund the initiative.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, I just want to ask one  
6 question before I give the floor to my colleagues.  
7 You know, when we were talking about the Learning Lab  
8 sites, have there been any issues around food supply  
9 and to the Learning Lab sites and specifically, I  
10 have been approached about in regard to access to  
11 nutritious Kosher foods. And has DYCD explored ways  
12 that maybe the Learning Lab providers can use their  
13 own Kosher caterers and be reimbursed for providing  
14 the meals, which would eliminate travel requirements  
15 as well as ensure that these meals are high quality.

16 CHRIS TRICARICO: I can answer that question.

17 SUSAN HASSELL: Thank you Chris.

18 CHRIS TRICARICO: So, we work very closely with  
19 DYCD as well as the other Learning Bridges program to  
20 know the number of students at each facility. We are  
21 providing meals for all of those sites, including the  
22 sites at Learning Labs through DYCD. We are in  
23 constant contact with the team at DYCD, in fact we  
24 just had conference call a couple of hours ago about  
25 meals that are being provided there. We are also

1  
2 providing Kosher meals at several sites. DYCD  
3 Learning Lab sites. The meals that were requested  
4 went through the facility itself, we never got any  
5 student or parent Kosher request but we are still  
6 providing around 450 to 500 Kosher meals a day at  
7 sites. There have been no supply chain issue.

8 When there ever is an issue regarding the  
9 specific meal we address it right away. We are in  
10 constant contact like I said. We are always open to  
11 hearing feedback and addressing anything that may  
12 come up. As far as sites using their own caterer's,  
13 we are providing the meals as a service. If a site  
14 wanted to go out and procure and pay for their own  
15 meals through a different service, they could  
16 definitely do that. We are just providing this  
17 option, obviously any DOE student that attends  
18 Learning Bridges or Learning Lab program, we are  
19 getting reimbursed for those meals.

20 So, I think that is one of the advantages of the  
21 Learning Bridges Labs using our service.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: So, if they did go out and  
23 procure their own meals they would not be, there  
24 would be no reimbursement for them.

1  
2 CHRIS TRICARICO: That they could apply to be  
3 their own SFA, their own School Food Authority if  
4 they would like to but that's a long process for them  
5 to be able to do that. When we are providing meals,  
6 we are covered under our own SFA. New York City has  
7 the largest school food supplier in the country.  
8 Obviously, we are getting reimbursed by the federal  
9 government.

10 So, the dots kind of line up. The T's cross when  
11 we are doing it, so we are getting reimbursed for  
12 every meal we serve, breakfast and lunch to a New  
13 York City student whether they are in school person  
14 learning, whether they are providing takeout meals or  
15 whether they are in the Learning Bridges or Lab  
16 program. We will also provide meals obviously at the  
17 REC programs and we talked about that a little while  
18 ago. And just to bring up one of the questions, I  
19 don't think it was asked specifically, if the schools  
20 do close again and go full remote, my folks are  
21 essential. My folks work, we will continue to  
22 provide meals exactly the way we are providing meals  
23 today. We haven't had a day off since March. The  
24 only other day we had off was Labor Day. We will

1  
2 continue to provide meals even over the holidays as  
3 well.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, and you might have said  
5 this but what is the redress that they have if there  
6 are issues with the quality of the meals?

7 CHRIS TRICARICO: Every single site, Learning  
8 Labs or Learning Bridges has a contact for one of my  
9 managers at the closest site where food is being  
10 picked up. They are to go directly to that person.  
11 I get involved 99 percent of the time to make sure  
12 the issue is resolved immediately. Whether it is a  
13 manufacturer issue or a food service line issue. So,  
14 they know exactly who to contact and I am on about 90  
15 percent of those emails when they come in and we make  
16 sure they are addressed immediately. We don't want  
17 any issues happening but serving the amount of meals  
18 that we do on a normal day, which is a million.  
19 During this time it is a little bit less than  
20 500,000. We know there may be an issue here or  
21 there, it is not acceptable but we will address it as  
22 soon as we possibly can.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, I just want to ask  
24 Commissioner Haskell, you know, with the - in the  
25 attempt to increase the number of sites that we have,

1  
2 a number of people, a number of CBO's have applied to  
3 be Learning Lab sites. And there might have been a  
4 reason why they were denied. If they have taken  
5 measures to mitigate whatever those circumstances  
6 were, is there an appeal process for them to sort of  
7 reapply and be considered?

8 SUSAN HASKELL: Thank you for that question, I am  
9 going to throw that to my colleague Darryl Rattray  
10 who can talk a little bit in general about the  
11 process for application and that should answer your  
12 question.

13 DARRYL RATTRAY: Good morning again Chair Rose.  
14 So, I would answer this, I guess the fuller answer  
15 and I will get to the point where a provider may have  
16 been denied and whether or not there is an appeal  
17 process.

18 So, of course, any providers that are submitting  
19 to operate a Learning Lab that is not an existing  
20 DYCD provider is going through the RFI.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Right.

22 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, the first step there is we  
23 get them through the RFI, our procurement department  
24 does a quick responsibility and termination. They  
25 are checking to see that there is no adverse



1  
2 information on this particular provider. At that  
3 point, it becomes alphabet soup of city government.  
4 I am sending it to DDC, FDNY, DOD, DCAS, EDC. We are  
5 looking at that site, we are doing site inspections.  
6 Someone is on the ground doing a walk through making  
7 sure that that site is safe for childcare. At the  
8 point that we deem the site safe, it has a proper  
9 fire alarm systems etc., they go to what I am calling  
10 in what we are now coining as the final DYCD  
11 interview.

12 Now, of course, as you all know, ordinarily an  
13 initiative like this we would have done a  
14 comprehensive RFP process. Because this is an RFI,  
15 folks are expressing interest quickly through the  
16 RFI. So, during this final interview if you will, it  
17 is a panel of DYCD staff. We are discussing the  
18 experience of the organization; the plans they have  
19 for the Learning Lab and the readiness they have to  
20 get the lab up and running. If they pass the  
21 interview, we move them forward to a Learning Lab  
22 contract. If they don't pass, they got a declamation  
23 letter from our procurement department. If there is  
24 anything that they cleared up or if they feel that  
25 they may be ready to attempt again if you will, they

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can send us a letter. I don't know the timeline on that process when we are going to entertain going back to a set that got declined but they should certainly email us a letter indicating the details and that they are requesting another opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, thank you. I will now turn back to our moderator to call upon my colleagues for questions of this panel.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Chair Rose. We do not have any other Council Member questions at this time. It appears that if there are Council Members or anyone that has a question, please use the raise hand function in Zoom. We don't have any other questions.

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, alright. So, before we move on -

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh, sorry, apologies Chair Rose. Chair Rosenthal is waving, I think she might have a question.

CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Sorry, just a couple of follow ups and Chair Rose, you really have nailed all of it. A quick follow up question and I am back to the budget for just one second. Are there any

1  
2 providers who have had their contracts modified and  
3 signed off on?

4 SUSAN HASKELL: We will need to unmute Jagdeen  
5 and Nevita to respond to that and I suspect they will  
6 want to hear a little more detail about what you mean  
7 by signed off and modified. Yes, many of our  
8 contracts are getting amendments; that's the existing  
9 provider group not the RFI and there are so many  
10 layers of sign off.

11 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: What I mean is to the  
12 point where the Comptroller can release the money if  
13 invoice and has anyone started invoicing?

14 JAGDEEN PHANOR: So, I am going to pivot to  
15 Nevita because she is on the that operational team.  
16 Nevita, do you want to get that?

17 NEVITA BAILEY: Sure, so as of right now, we do  
18 not have any contracts or actions associated learning  
19 labs that have been registered. So, as of right now,  
20 they are in the process and we have almost three  
21 dozen that are in queue, rather they be at MOCS or  
22 the Comptroller's Office for Reimbursement. So,  
23 that's in process, so as of right now, nothing is  
24 registered reflecting the Learning Lab Initiative.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you. So, if I  
3 remember correctly there were 100 contracts and of  
4 course from multiple sites.

5 NEVITA BAILEY: Correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: That you are modifying or  
7 117, I forget but your point being that some of those  
8 are already at the Comptroller's office.

9 NEVITA BAILEY: I am just going to expand on  
10 that. So, what Jagdeen Phanor was referring to early  
11 is that a number of contracts associated with the  
12 Learning Lab Initiative, about 7 percent or more, are  
13 actually amendments to existing contracts. So, that  
14 means if a provider has an existing registered  
15 contract that's base, they are able to submit an  
16 invoice and be reimbursed for it.

17 So, there should be no issues for the large part  
18 for most of our organizations to get reimbursed for  
19 delivering services.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Wow, that's a great  
21 interesting answer. So, how many contracts are in  
22 that stage?

23 JAGDEEN PHANOR: 171 have existing contracts.

24 So, 117 have existing contracts. That's where Nevita

1  
2 was able to say approximately 70 percent of our total  
3 contracts have access to some cash flow.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Sorry, out of 117 out of  
5 how many?

6 JAGDEEN PHANOR: 171 contracts.

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Got it and for those 117,  
8 how many can right today submit an invoice?

9 JAGDEEN PHANOR: They all can, they all can.

10 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Full stop.

11 JAGDEEN PHANOR: Full stop.

12 NEVITA BAILEY: Full stop. All these programs as  
13 a reminder many of these programs have existing  
14 afterschool contracts. They are currently  
15 operational; they can submit an invoice and be  
16 reimbursed for those. We followed up with our  
17 leadership and our payments division and she has  
18 indicated that she has not received any inquiries or  
19 complaints from our provider community indicating  
20 that there is any issues regarding cash flow or  
21 request for funds.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And so, have any  
23 presented – how many have presented invoices? How  
24 many of the contracts?

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2 NEVITA BAILEY: We get contracts on a regular  
3 basis. Last year DYCD did over 28,000 invoices. I  
4 mean -

5 SUSAN HASKELL: Chair, it would be hard because  
6 we are allowing them to expense off their base  
7 contract. It would be hard to know if this was a  
8 Learning Lab until that all gets rectified.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, I get it. Thank  
10 you so much and so when you talked about there are  
11 number that are in the Comptroller's Office, that  
12 would be of the one's, I am going to do my math,  
13 120/50, there are roughly 50 that are new contracts,  
14 right?

15 JAGDEEN PHANOR: Yes, that's correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Okay.

17 NEVITA BAILEY: There are roughly 50 new  
18 providers that have been introduced to the DYCD  
19 portfolio that will have to get registered.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And you - so you said  
21 some of them are already in the Comptroller's office  
22 waiting for that final registration or?

23 NEVITA BAILEY: Of the 40, I don't want to say  
24 that necessarily they are new CBO's but there are a  
25

1  
2 number of actions that are currently have moved along  
3 in the process and are closer to registration.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Have any of those been  
5 able to submit invoices?

6 NEVITA BAILEY: Are you asking regarding the new  
7 providers? As of right now, there has been no new  
8 providers that have been registered. So, as of right  
9 now, they are unable to submit an invoice and be  
10 reimbursed.

11 JAGDEEN PHANOR: I want to be able to reiterate  
12 that our ACO has been working very closely with them  
13 and MOCS to try to get the loan going. So, we are  
14 doing everything possible to try to make sure that  
15 that subset of our contractors are trying to get the  
16 assistance that's needed.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Great, great, great,  
18 great. Yeah, so you are setting them up, so that as  
19 soon as they are registered, they can get a loan from  
20 the returnable grant fund.

21 NEVITA BAILEY: That is correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Okay and you are  
23 confirmed that there is enough money in the  
24 returnable grant fund?

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2 NEVITA BAILEY: I can't speak to that. The MOCS  
3 would have to speak to that but what I am confirming  
4 is that we are doing our due diligence in directing  
5 providers who don't have access to cash flow to the  
6 loan fund and we are working very closely with them  
7 and it is our hope that many of them will get  
8 through.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, I only ask because  
10 again, if this is a hurdle in some ways for new  
11 providers, it is just interesting to think about as  
12 we try to expand it to so many more.

13 NEVITA BAILEY: Understood. It is on MOCS radar  
14 and again, I can't - I think Susan has said  
15 tremendously throughout this hearing but we have been  
16 working very well with many of our partners and many  
17 of the different agencies and whether it is MOCS,  
18 DOE, everyone has stepped up to the plate and  
19 understand the severity of you know, this initiative,  
20 so.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: That's so, so helpful.  
22 Last question, just about health and safety. Deputy  
23 Chancellor Wallack mentioned that a just very few  
24 number of the sites have incurred anyone with COVID.  
25 Do you have roughly a percentage or some sort of data



1  
2 around how many sites have experienced a case with  
3 COVID?

4 SUSAN HASSELL: I don't want to give you  
5 information and have to walk it back but I will say  
6 very anecdotally and I do - I am looking at that  
7 regularly. We hadn't as of Friday had any Learning  
8 Lab site closures at all. For the K to 8, actually  
9 that was true for the Early Childhood as well.

10 We definitely had some reports of either a  
11 symptomatic child or a COVID tested positive child or  
12 staff person. In those cases, the person would be  
13 staying home to quarantine and if they had close  
14 contact with another person in the program, those  
15 people would also get a letter to say - I am sorry,  
16 if the case was confirmed also to quarantine.

17 So, there has definitely been a little bit of  
18 reporting going on that we are staying on top of,  
19 working closely with our partners, test and trace,  
20 Department of Health, telling us exactly you know,  
21 when was the contagious period and here is the  
22 specific action steps to take with providers.

23 So, it has been, I think it has been relatively  
24 low but yeah, certainly there have been cases.

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CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much.

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That's it for me Chair Rose. Thank you so much to

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the Administration. I really want to express you

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know, gratitude to you all. I know how hard you are

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working on behalf of our city's kids, so you know,

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thank you for that.

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SUSAN HASSELL: Thank you. Chair Rose, you need

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to be unmuted.

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CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. Thank you Chair

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Rosenthal for your thoughtful and insightful

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questions. I just have a few more and then we will

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let you go. I know it has been a long day. I was

14

just wondering in terms of safety, are the protocols,

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have the protocols for cleaning and disinfecting for

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the childcare providers and how were they made aware

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of what those protocols are and are they expected to

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cover the extra costs for regular deep cleaning and

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disinfecting? And how are you monitoring and

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enforcing these protocols?

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SUSAN HASSELL: Okay, I am going to turn to my

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colleague Wanda Ascherl to talk a little bit about

23

the monitoring and Josh may want to weigh in as well.

24

JOSH WALLACK: Yeah.

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1  
2 SUSAN HASKELL: I will say that the contract for  
3 Learning Labs includes the costs for OTPS which would  
4 include your cleaning and disinfecting and your PPE  
5 and going back to the summer, Department of Health  
6 has been very clear these are the guidelines for  
7 cleaning and disinfecting. It is not rocket science  
8 but it is essential that programs adhere to this.  
9 So, we are reiterating it regularly. It is part of  
10 our core guide for providers, hand hygiene,  
11 respiration hygiene, keeping your masks on, cleaning  
12 first and then disinfecting. All the commonly used  
13 areas in the program. That's you know, becoming part  
14 of the day to day protocol that they are used to and  
15 we keep offering them supports about how to do that.

16 We also have some monitoring efforts in place.  
17 Wanda, do you want to talk a little bit about that  
18 and maybe DOE wants to share some of their efforts as  
19 well.

20 WANDA ASCHERL: Sure. Good afternoon Chair Rose  
21 and Chair Rosenthal. As Susan mentioned, in  
22 partnership with the division of Early Childhood  
23 Education, the Office of Health will be providing in  
24 addition to our messaging to our providers, they are  
25 providing nursing support during over the course of

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2 this year. And the support includes call-ins, in-  
3 person support to ensure that all programs have  
4 appropriate process and practices in place and to  
5 respond to program specific needs. They will also be  
6 available to guide program with their health and  
7 safety practices. Any questions that they may have  
8 about COVID-19 symptoms and also the set up of the  
9 isolation rooms and the use of PPE's.

10 And then these nurses are going to be visiting  
11 programs over at least once every four to six weeks  
12 and in addition to these support services from these  
13 experts, DYCD to what Susan was mentioning is also  
14 conducting in-person visits over the next couple of  
15 weeks and we are going to be utilizing our own  
16 evaluation tool that is designed to provide  
17 additional support, especially as they are navigating  
18 contracts and attendance tracking. And it is also  
19 designed to provide coaching and to observe program  
20 design and all around safety practices, overall  
21 quality of services and then there are three main  
22 areas that we are looking at, administration. So,  
23 anything around paperwork, attendance tracking,  
24 program practices, you know what do they have in  
25

1  
2 place to ensure safety. What is their program design  
3 and then just overall, service quality.

4 And then lastly, we anticipate over the next  
5 couple of days to have a series of both internal and  
6 external communication on the evaluation tools, so  
7 that everyone kind of knows what to expect, is  
8 prepared and we can answer any of their questions as  
9 we conduct our visits in person over the next couple  
10 of weeks.

11 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Is there a testing component?  
12 Are tests available at these sites for the students  
13 that are participating and possibly their family  
14 members?

15 WANDA ASCHERL: Can you clarify? What do you  
16 mean by testing?

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Testing of COVID, you know,  
18 testing and tracing. Is there any component that's  
19 available?

20 SUSAN HASKELL: I am sorry Chair Rose.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: I am sorry.

22 SUSAN HASKELL: I am sorry to interrupt you. I  
23 was going to say, all the community based  
24 organizations providing Learning Labs programs were  
25 given priority access through city run testing sites

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for expedited results and that was before programs began but it continues now. So, all the provider staff are informed. Providers are making sure that families know either when somebody is symptomatic or just as preventative measures. Here are the places you go; it is in our guide. Here is where you can access free testing. It is not part of the onsite programming for the most part, there maybe some exceptions where providers are doing that onsite but it is available to all the programs.

WANDA ASCHERL: Yes and to add to that, some of our, to what Susan was just saying, some of our providers have partnered with like local clinics and they have created like a community free testing day. So, you know, they are leveraging their resources and their partners within their community.

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: And are we doing anything to support the mental health needs of the children and their families in the Learning Lab programs?

SUSAN HASKELL: Yeah, I want to say like I think and I know DOE will have something to say about this to because I know for both agencies, like the past few years, there has been a tremendous focus on social, emotional learning and providing trauma

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informed support for families and we are aware, obviously this is an incredibly stressful time for everybody especially for young people, some of them are really grieving but in any case, they have lost a lot of the social networks that are part of basic human development as child development, youth development and so, I a feel like it is positive that we had laid the ground work through mental health first aid trainings, through trauma informed practices, series of capacity building trainings that we have offered to staff in programs.

On top of that, we have got all the resources of Thrive, texting and calling NYC Well for your specific questions. Their website has great resources about how to talk to young people about what is going on with an emphasis on safety. How to engage young people and identify signs where somebody is really you know; we are all struggling but struggling in a way that might need some extra support.

So, I feel we had a great foundation before the pandemic and now we have a lot of concrete resources that we are sharing. I know DOE has similar supports for providers.

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2 JOSH WALLACK: That's been a big focus for us in  
3 the school system over the last couple of years and  
4 then as we entered this fall, through out division of  
5 school climate and wellness, we made sure that all  
6 the staff in our school buildings and all of the team  
7 in the division of early childhood got some  
8 additional support, so that we could be equipped to  
9 provide trauma informed care and mental health  
10 support in the context of what we do with families  
11 every day, just understanding. Try to be sympathetic  
12 to and attentive to the experiences that they have  
13 undergone during this pandemic and provide  
14 appropriate support to them.

15 We are also thinking hard about how our nurses  
16 can supplement that as well as we begin to integrate  
17 them more and more into the program. So, it's a big  
18 focus of ours as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: So, when the nurses visit, do  
20 they actually get the opportunity to sit and speak  
21 with the young people to make some type of assessment  
22 of what maybe the mental health needs might be? You  
23 are saying that there is an in service kind of  
24 training for our providers to maybe recognize trauma  
25



1  
2 induced behaviors or something that our young people  
3 might be experiencing.

4       You know, I just want to know if it is a part of  
5 the sort of a regular part of the programming and  
6 what we look for in terms of needs for the young  
7 people who are in learning labs. Is that a  
8 component.

9       JOSH WALLACK: Yeah, I will just say on the early  
10 childhood side, I will just start. It is and it  
11 really has been part of the foundation of 3K and PreK  
12 work from the beginning and we have a team of social  
13 workers that's deployed to sites to help build that  
14 capacity in our community based partners and I think  
15 we just accelerated and built on that as we entered  
16 the pandemic. And just made sure all of our teams  
17 were trained on the fundamentals of trauma informed  
18 care, so that we could respond appropriately.

19       So, that's what we have done sort of on the  
20 preschool site. I think the school age side, again,  
21 just sticking with Department of Education, I think  
22 all the students in Learning Bridges are also  
23 attending DOE schools where those teams were also  
24 trained in trauma informed care as we approach this  
25 school year. And so, those kids are getting support

1  
2 from their school based teams in addition to the work  
3 that we are doing with providers Learning Bridges.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, well, I want to thank  
5 you. I really would like to thank you all from the  
6 Administration for what you are doing. I know that  
7 these are very challenging times. They are  
8 challenging for you as Administrators but they are  
9 also very challenging for our families who have to  
10 try to ensure that their children are getting the  
11 best quality education that they can while being able  
12 to take care of their families because they are  
13 essential workers and they have to support these  
14 families economically.

15 And so, I want to thank you for you know, working  
16 as hard as you are. As diligently and as  
17 expeditiously as you are to fill these slots. I  
18 still have a concern about those who have not gotten  
19 placement. You know, I don't want this to become an  
20 issue of educational neglect where our children are  
21 not getting what they are rightfully entitled to.  
22 So, I am willing to do all that we can to help you  
23 get all of the sites that you need to accommodate the  
24 total needs and that we really have to do a better  
25 job of addressing the needs of our young people who

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have IEP's. Who need you know, more supportive services in order for us to meet the mandates of their IEP's. And so, with that, again, I say that whatever we can do, I can do to help expedite these situations, please let me know and I thank you. I know that you are all working as hard as you can to mitigate any of the obstacles that we have. And so, I would like to thank you. I would just like to thank you.

So, I will now turn the Committee back to our Moderator to call on members of the public to testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL And before we excuse the Administration, apologies, I think Chair Rosenthal also had another question.

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Oh, I am sorry.

CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: It is like the hearing that - it is like Groundhog Day. It just never ends but I just want to triple check with you that if our schools close, you will remain open and that any child who is currently enrolled in a DOE school, will have access to - and who maybe is already signed up with right, will continue with their Learning Lab and Learning Bridges program. How about kids, okay, so

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for kids who are not enrolled currently and if schools were to close, they will not – I just want to say it out loud, they will not have access to a Learning Lab or Learning Bridge program but you will continue to make sites available up on your website. What I am thinking about is let's say there is a kid who did not opt for blended learning but opted for onsite. Oh, can you do that? Well, if there was a school, maybe a D75 school. Maybe the question is will D75 schools remain open as Learning Lab if the rest of the schools close down?

SUSAN HASSELL: Well, let me start with this, yes, Learning Bridges programs will remain open even if schools are shut down. Yes, all currently enrolled students who are DOE students enrolled in blended learning will continue to be served at Learning Bridges programs.

Yes, we will continue to open new sites and add eligible applicant families to those sites to the extent that they still have capacity even after offering possibly additional days to the currently enrolled students. And yes, we want to continue to accept applications from people, sticking with the

1  
2 eligibility of DOE enrolled students who had opted  
3 into blended learning.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: So, incredibly helpful  
5 but can you answer the question about the D75  
6 schools?

7 SUSAN HASKELL: I don't know that. I don't know  
8 if Josh has that information.

9 JOSH WALLACK: Your question is would they remain  
10 open if the citywide positivity went above 3 percent.  
11 I want to triple check, my understanding is that the  
12 entire system would close. So, that's my  
13 understanding, so we would be in a situation where  
14 those kids, if they weren't already enrolled in  
15 Learning Bridges, you know, we would have to talk  
16 with those families. But let me triple check that  
17 and I will get back to you but that's my  
18 understanding.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And you know, there is no  
20 good answer in that situation, right. I mean, this  
21 is a tough thing, no one has gone through it. Do we  
22 want the D75 schools to stay open? There are reasons  
23 to do that. Do we want them to close? There are  
24 reasons to do that but I guess, my question is, would  
25 DOE just if you could confirm for me that you will

1  
2 make real consideration about D75 schools sort of  
3 separately independent from the rest of the school  
4 system.

5 JOSH WALLACK: Say that again, I am sorry, I just  
6 missed part of that.

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Just that, sorry, there  
8 were other people here. Just that you will take into  
9 consideration the unique needs of D75 kids and  
10 parents as you think of closing the schools system.

11 JOSH WALLACK: Oh, absolutely, absolutely, no  
12 question about it.

13 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Great thank you and for  
14 sites that are not schools, are they identified if  
15 anything should happen on their site. In other  
16 words, do they automatically through the contract  
17 carry the city's identification should something  
18 happen?

19 SUSAN HASKELL: I am going to get back to you  
20 about that. About the specific detail in the  
21 contract. So, their legal department, we can get  
22 back to you. I am not sure about that. I don't know  
23 about DOE.

24 JOSH WALLACK: Same, I have to check.  
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Okay, so, what I am  
3 hearing from - that question comes from a provider,  
4 so they are concerned that if the schools close and  
5 their site remains open, that the city has not made  
6 it so they are identified.

7 So, particularly, should the schools close, I  
8 hope you can resolve that situation and not leave the  
9 providers out on a limb. Okay, thank you very much.

10 JOSH WALLACK: Thank you.

11 SUSAN HASSELL: Got it and we, you know,  
12 Commissioner Chong, DYCD, my colleagues here, we  
13 really want to thank you guys for your support as  
14 well. This has definitely been like a full team  
15 effort and I know in particular Chair Rose you know,  
16 pushing us, asking questions, letting us know where  
17 there are concerns across the community along the way  
18 and if I may the silver lining of this dark, dark  
19 period has been getting to know some of my fabulous  
20 colleagues that we haven't connected with before and  
21 just seeing that the DOE team, the DYCD team and our  
22 other agency partners doubling down, tripling down,  
23 working so hard to help meet the needs of families.  
24 No one complaining, even though I am sure we are all  
25 exhausted and struggling with the some of the same

1  
2 issues you have highlighted here today. And I just  
3 want to take the opportunity to say you know, on the  
4 record, how much I appreciate working with my  
5 colleagues and how impressed I am and we are grateful  
6 to be in these jobs and have the opportunity to serve  
7 the city and that is one silver lining in this  
8 experience.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: That is really great that  
10 you said that. Terrific, we are only going to have  
11 one more panel that is going to have some parents and  
12 some providers on it. I would hope the city could  
13 find at least one person to stay on this Zoom, just  
14 to make sure you know, we know you are hearing their  
15 concerns. That would be really great. Thank you.

16 SUSAN HASKELL: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. Thank you again  
18 Chair Rosenthal and yes, if Admin could stay, we  
19 really would like you to stay. It is only three  
20 panelists and they only have three minutes each. So,  
21 please stay.

22 Okay, so now I am going to turn it back to the  
23 Moderator so that she can call on the members of the  
24 public to testify.



1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Chair Rose  
3 and Chair Rosenthal. Chair Rose, we now have four  
4 members of the next panel that are logged in. One  
5 more person joined us, so we will have one panel  
6 today with four individuals. We will name all those  
7 individuals but first, I just want to go over some  
8 housekeeping items and some reminders.

9 For public testimony, I will call up individuals  
10 in panels, so the one panel. Council Members who  
11 have questions for a particular panelist, please use  
12 the raise hand function in Zoom. You will be called  
13 on after everyone in the panel has completed their  
14 testimony.

15 For public panelists, once I call your name, a  
16 member of our staff will unmute you and a Sergeant at  
17 Arms will give you the go ahead to begin speaking  
18 after they set the timer and there is a slight delay  
19 in unmuting you and you will get a box to accept the  
20 unmute, so please click the unmute button when you  
21 see that.

22 All public testimony will be limited to a three  
23 minute clock. After I call your name, please wait a  
24 brief moment for the Sergeant at Arms to announce  
25 that you may begin before you start your testimony.

1 so, the panelists today, there will be one panel and  
2 I will list your names in order and then call the  
3 first panelist. It will Faith Behum and apologies  
4 for any pronunciation errors again. Gregory Brender  
5 from United Neighborhood Houses, David Gaskin from  
6 Seamen's Society for Children and Families and  
7 finally Felicia Soodeen.  
8

9 So, we will start with panelist one, Faith Behum,  
10 you may begin your testimony once the Sergeant calls  
11 the clock.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin now.

13 FAITH BEHUM: Thank you Chairpersons Rose and  
14 Rosenthal for the opportunity to present testimony at  
15 this hearing today. My name is Faith Behum and I am  
16 an Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA Federation of  
17 New York.

18 Ten of UJA's nonprofit partners oversee Learning  
19 Labs, providing services and supports to children and  
20 youth in all five New York City boroughs. I am going  
21 to outline a sampling of the issues UJA's nonprofit  
22 partners have experienced overseeing the Learning  
23 Labs and will submit my entire testimony.

24 First, there have been a number of issues with  
25 Kosher food and Learning Labs. Providers must invest

1 a significant amount of time traveling to and from  
2 the DOE Grab and Go sites that supply Kosher food.  
3 UJA agencies have reported experiencing issues with  
4 the Grab and Go program. Including with the meal  
5 quality, many report a lack of variety and  
6 unappealing cold meals. Food being inappropriate to  
7 meet the nutritional needs of the children and youth.  
8 For example, meals consisting solely of carrots and  
9 humas, and an insufficient number of meals available  
10 for participants in their programs.  
11

12 All of these issues could be resolved if our  
13 providers are compensated to provide these meals  
14 within their own agencies using their own Kosher  
15 carriers.

16 Second, UJA agencies set a Learning Lab  
17 Initiative as an opportunity to support children and  
18 youth, including those with disabilities as they  
19 navigate remote learning and provide a safe place for  
20 families to leave their children as they return to  
21 work. When Learning Labs are first announced,  
22 students with disabilities are one of the groups  
23 indicated as being prioritized the benefit from the  
24 program. Unfortunately UJA's network of nonprofit  
25

1  
2 partners have struggled to serve individuals with  
3 disabilities through the Learning Lab programs.

4 DYCD did mention when they were testifying  
5 earlier today that families would be given more of a  
6 say in which learning labs their child can attend and  
7 this will positively impact children and youth with  
8 disabilities. Allowing them to choose learning lab  
9 placement and organizations that are closer to their  
10 homes and in programs they are familiar with.

11 What stills remains a problem is that programs  
12 that do have individuals with disabilities in their  
13 learning labs are finding it incredibly difficult to  
14 support these participants appropriately. Many of  
15 these individuals require one on one supports when  
16 they attend school and also require this when they  
17 are engaging in remote learning. Learning Lab  
18 contracts offer no additional financial assistance  
19 for programs to provide these supports.

20 UJA urges DYCD to increase the per participant  
21 rate for learning lab providers who have students  
22 with disabilities enrolled in their programs. And  
23 quickly, some things I want to highlight. Guidance  
24 that is given to providers, especially when it is  
25 addressing school closures is often reactionary and

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2 leaves many learning lab providers with more  
3 questions than answers. Comprehensive background  
4 checks being completed in a timely manner are  
5 impacting learning lab providers ability to staff  
6 their programs.

7 Providers have no say in how many schools they  
8 are matched with, causing these programs to be  
9 overwhelmed by the various school schedules they need  
10 to build Learning Lab services around and providers  
11 still have nothing in writing -

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You time is up.

13 FAITH BEHUM: Sorry. Have nothing in writing  
14 from DYCD that will be compensated the full amount of  
15 their contract and make providers continue to wait to  
16 be compensated for learning lab services they have  
17 already overseen.

18 Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: I would like to hear the rest  
20 of your comments. Can you wrap it up in a few  
21 seconds?

22 FAITH BEHUM: Oh, that was it. Yeah, I actually  
23 did, yeah. The last thing was the being compensated  
24 the full amount of their contract. We just want to

1  
2 have something in writing from DYCD saying that that  
3 is going to happen.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Our next  
6 witness will be Gregory Brender from United  
7 Neighborhood Houses and just a reminder to everyone,  
8 if Council Members could please use the raise hand  
9 function if you have questions and that written  
10 testimony will also be accepted up to 72 hours after  
11 the hearing. Thank you. Mr. Brender?

12 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you and thank you Chair  
13 Rose and Chair Rosenthal and -

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 GREGORY BRENDER: Oh, I also see that several  
16 members of the Administration and DYCD and DOE have  
17 stayed on in response to Chair Rose's request. So,  
18 thank you for that.

19 I am Gregory Brender from United Neighborhood  
20 Houses; we are a policy and social change  
21 organization in New York City settlement houses. I  
22 have submitted longer written testimony, but I want  
23 to run through our recommendations around Learning  
24 Labs and also just emphasize that Learning Labs are  
25 one of the many ways in which CBO's have been called

1  
2 on in even greater degree to respond to this crisis  
3 particularly for children and youth.

4       The first thing is, I think we need to recognize  
5 that in keeping learning labs open during any school  
6 shutdown, that that requires the staff of these  
7 community based organizations to risk their own  
8 health and safety to keep providing emergency  
9 childcare for New York City to continue to offer this  
10 service. These are staff who are generally paid  
11 lower than similar staff in public schools and in  
12 order to – they deserve to receive incentive pay  
13 because of the risks they are taking in order to  
14 provide an emergency childcare system for New York  
15 City's families.

16       The other key recommendations: We urge that there  
17 is clear communication with Learning Lab providers if  
18 New York City faces a systemwide school building  
19 shutdown. That we need to ensure that funding  
20 remains consistent. This was something that was  
21 addressed in the hearing but we need to keep the  
22 understanding that as an emergency system, this is  
23 not something you want to base on the number of  
24 children participating. You need to base it on that  
25 this is a system there for when parents desperately

1  
2 need childcare because of their role as essential  
3 workers during the pandemic.

4 We want to have DYCD and DOE provide greater  
5 flexibility around scheduling, particularly because  
6 providers are receiving rosters that don't have  
7 information about when the children are in their  
8 hybrid school in-person days. We want to make sure  
9 that they have flexibility to maintain schedules and  
10 particularly to make sure that they have appropriate  
11 numbers of children in so that they do not go over  
12 any minimums or maximums for classroom sizes.

13 This is something that was discussed in the  
14 hearing but as noted many of the providers, our  
15 afterschool providers, they already have  
16 relationships with many of the families and in some  
17 cases you have the case where the kids are actually  
18 leaving the learning labs to go home to participate  
19 in remote afterschool. We want to find ways to make  
20 sure that there is a seamless transition so that you  
21 actually have something providing 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.,  
22 the full day of care that youth development programs  
23 have been working with schools to provide for all  
24 these years as part of these development framework.



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2 We want to ensure that there are additional  
3 resources available to staff learning labs if they  
4 need to expand and in particular if there is a  
5 school shutdown and you are now serving the same  
6 number of children but for a larger number of days.  
7 You need to increase the number of staff and increase  
8 the amount of space available, so that they can keep  
9 children in separate classrooms and maintain the pod  
10 model.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is up.

12 GREGORY BRENDER: Thanks.

13 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Oh, go ahead.

14 GREGORY BRENDER: And then the other two, I just  
15 wanted to reiterate the backlog of comprehensive  
16 background checks is a major issue and it is  
17 particularly an issue for learning lab providers  
18 because the solution that came to this issue from the  
19 state was to allow supervised clearance. Is where an  
20 already cleared staff member would be supervising  
21 these staff members but because learning labs are  
22 sometimes opening these sites, they can't avail  
23 themselves of that because they don't necessarily  
24 have a cleared staff member in that site. So, it is  
25 really important, particularly if we are going to see

1  
2 an expansion of this program, that we clear the  
3 backlog of comprehensive background checks. We make  
4 sure that these important checks which we fully  
5 support happening. They are checking for very  
6 important things around who we want to have access to  
7 children. That that system works smoothly and  
8 actually checks back to providers in a timely manner  
9 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

10 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

11 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alright and we will move to  
13 the next panelist, which will be David Gaskin from  
14 the Seamen's Society for Children and Families. Mr.  
15 Gaskin.

16 DAVID GASKIN: Thank you very much.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin now.

18 DAVID GASKIN: Thank you very much. My name is  
19 David Gaskin, I am the President and CEO of Seamen's  
20 Society for Children and Families and before I make  
21 my remarks, I just wanted to say this is a very  
22 critical conversation. I wanted to thank Chair Rose,  
23 Chair Rosenthal, Commissioner Haskell, Deputy  
24 Chancellor Wallack and Associate Commissioner Rattray  
25 for the discussion today.

1  
2 I am here really to support the testimony of  
3 Nellie Suarez, our Director of our Family Day Care  
4 program, hopefully we can unmute her as well and  
5 Felicia Soodeen the Vice President of the programs.

6 Seamen's Society has been fortunate to serve New  
7 York City families since our founding on Staten  
8 Island in 1846. Since our beginning 174 years ago,  
9 Seamen's has been a place of comfort and resilience  
10 for vulnerable children and families, especially  
11 during times of uncertainty, including the last  
12 pandemic in 1918. We are well positioned as you will  
13 hear from Felicia and Nellie today to provide the  
14 learning lab services. We have actually been a day  
15 care provider for the past 40 years and we have been  
16 very successful at it.

17 During the pandemic, we have been the only  
18 provider of emergency childcare services to Staten  
19 Island families of first responders and we are very  
20 proud of that. I think the biggest take away from  
21 the discussion that Felicia and Nellie will share, in  
22 terms of our experience with the Learning Labs  
23 Initiative, is really that we are well positioned.  
24 We have the capacity, the staff, the safe space. We  
25 actually literally call it a learning lab and we have

1  
2 the high quality level of experience and connection  
3 to the community on Staten Island to responsibly and  
4 safely serve the children in the learning labs. We  
5 also have wrap around services that can support the  
6 children as well.

7 So, I just wanted to share my thoughts today. I  
8 appreciate the time for our testimonial and if you  
9 can unmute Nellie Suarez and Felicia Soodeen, they  
10 will continue our testimony.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, so we are going to  
12 switch our order. Chair's if this is okay, so the  
13 order had been Faith, Gregory, Faith Behum, Gregory  
14 Brender, David Gaskin, Felicia Soodeen and now Nellie  
15 Suarez, excuse my pronunciation. So, we will now go  
16 to Felicia Soodeen and Nellie Suarez and then, yes,  
17 that is correct. The host will unmute you and when  
18 the Sergeant calls the clock, you may begin.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: The time will begin.

20 FELICIA SOODEEN: Hi, my name is Felicia Soodeen,  
21 I am the Vice President of Seamen's Society -

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Louder.

23 FELICIA SOODEEN: Sorry, my name is Felicia  
24 Soodeen and I am the Vice President of Seamen's  
25 Society for Children and Families. I oversee the

1  
2 prevention program, which works on children who are  
3 eminent rest for placement into foster care. I also  
4 oversee the Domestic Violence program and the Family  
5 Day Care program.

6 Today, I am here to provide testimony that we  
7 should be able to provide childcare services under  
8 the Learning Bridges program to children in the  
9 community. We have been serving Staten Island in  
10 childcare services for over 40 years. We worked  
11 during the entire pandemic providing early education  
12 services to the children in need. If there is anyone  
13 in this community who is ready and willing to be able  
14 to provide services, it is us.

15 Is everyone hearing the same background? One  
16 second.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Now, we can't hear you at all.

18 FELICIA SOODEEN: Sorry, I muted because it was  
19 echoing. So, what I am going to do is I am going to  
20 turn it over to Nellie because we will both be  
21 echoing because we are in the same area.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

23 NELLIE SUAREZ: Good afternoon, I am Nellie  
24 Suarez and for the past 34 years I have worked as a  
25 Director of the Family Day Care Network and Seamen's

1  
2 Society for Children and Families. I want to thank  
3 Chair Rose and Chair Rosenthal for the opportunity to  
4 testify at this hearing. As Felicia mentioned, we  
5 have been providing childcare services to Staten  
6 Island for the past 40 years. We served  
7 approximately 200 children who were cared for by 21  
8 licensed providers.

9 Our program followed a public curriculum to  
10 prepare children for kindergarten. Our family day  
11 care program in all its history has never been on  
12 corrective action or heightened monitoring. Seamen's  
13 score in the past court system has always met or  
14 exceeded our expectations.

15 I would like to move on now to the Learning Lab  
16 and provide a breakdown of the sequence of events  
17 that actually led us to this hearing. On July 21<sup>st</sup>,  
18 Seamen's applied for the Learning Bridges program to  
19 provide childcare services for children when school  
20 is out of session. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, we were  
21 informed by DYCD that 100 slot contract will be  
22 awarded to us. On September 16<sup>th</sup>, Felicia Soodeen,  
23 Vice President of the program and myself were part of  
24 a remote interview led by DYCD Director Paula Calby.  
25 On September 21<sup>st</sup>, Seamen's was notified that the

1  
2 contract would be begin on October 5<sup>th</sup>. On October  
3 7<sup>th</sup>, Seamen's was informed by DYCD that they were  
4 unable to award us 100 slots. To date, we have no  
5 details as to why this decision was made and I just  
6 want to point out that there is still an overwhelming  
7 need for childcare on Staten Island. Parents need to  
8 work. There are public schools particularly in the  
9 same area that have not yet been matched with a  
10 Learning Bridges program. Parents are frustrated and  
11 still waiting to be contacted about their child's  
12 enrollment in the Learning Bridges program.

13 I would like to close by stating that Seamen's  
14 Society for Children and Families was and still is  
15 prepared to meet that need. Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Chair Rose.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. Thank you to all  
18 of the panelists. You know, I have been informed  
19 that DYCD holds weekly calls for providers and  
20 coalition members. Have the panelists communicated  
21 these concerns with DYCD and what was the outcome?

22 DAVID GASKIN: Go ahead Felicia. I was asked to  
23 unmute but we have communicated our concerns and go  
24 ahead Felicia.

1  
2 FELICIA SOODEEN: I was going to say, yes, we  
3 have communicated our concerns to DYCD. We reached  
4 out to them advocating for the need for the community  
5 services. We asked for an additional opportunity, so  
6 that we can provide service given the need to the  
7 community and we have not heard a response yet.

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay and were you at least  
9 told there would be some follow up? That there is an  
10 appeal process or anything? No, well, we addressed  
11 that on this hearing today and there will be some  
12 follow up at least to have a follow up conversation  
13 with you regarding this issue.

14 I was wondering if from Faith and Gregory, if you  
15 have had any conversations with DYCD either on their  
16 weekly calls or by any other source of communication  
17 about what your concerns are and has there been any  
18 follow up or what was their response to the concerns  
19 that were presented?

20 GREGORY BRENDER: We have raised these concerns  
21 with DYCD as well as with other agencies. I know  
22 that some of them go beyond DYCD and that there are  
23 particularly with for example, the background checks  
24 issues, we deal with the Health Department as well as  
25 also a lot of the decisions coming down both from



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DYCD and DOE particularly around allowing students from outside the initial feeder schools into the Learning Labs.

FAITH BEHUM: Yes and as far as our providers, specifically about the Kosher food issue. I know a number of them have talked to DYCD and DOE because there is a number of issues with getting spoiled and just not fresh food in the beginning and that has sense improved but as far as like the location of the Grab and Go sites, it is just a very time consuming process and the meals still, quite honestly aren't great. So, our providers have really been asking if they could be compensated for using their own Kosher caterers, their own in-house caterers that they actually use to feed the kids in their UPK programs. But so far, it is has been a hard no from DYCD and as far as the students with disabilities issue, a number of our providers, especially the ones who are really just want to serve kids who are experiencing and number of challenges. We have one program that have kids with autism, Down Syndrome and even physical disabilities and this program is like, we cannot properly serve these kids if we don't have an additional person helping them one on one.

1  
2 And they have reached out to DYCD just really  
3 advocating for the increase of rates, so that they  
4 could actually hire more people to help those kids  
5 but so far, there has not been any response on that  
6 end, on DYCD's end.

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay.

8 DAVID GASKIN: And if I could just add Chair Rose  
9 to my earlier comments. You know, it is hard to  
10 overstate that the Seamen's Society has a sterling  
11 record of service as it relates to childcare services  
12 on Staten Island. We have a sterling record and we  
13 know that there is increasing demand and certainly as  
14 the pandemic wears on, families are going to need  
15 support and as we saw today in the discussion, you  
16 know, there is a - demand is exceeding capacity right  
17 now by about 6,000 children.

18 So, with that being said, I think we have a very  
19 strong record of service upon which we are ready and  
20 willing and able to serve.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. Yes, I don't think  
22 that there is any question about the quality of the  
23 service that Seamen's Society has delivered for the  
24 residents of Staten Island and so, I again implore  
25 that you follow up and speak to them about the appeal

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process to see. Especially since, where in need of more seats, more slots. So, I will be following up with DYCD also to find out whether or not you have at least been given the opportunity to find out what criteria it was based on and if there is some other steps that could be taken.

I want to say to the other panelists that in terms of communication, I asked DYCD to have an official, you know, to stay on and follow up. So, I will follow up with DYCD to ensure that you know, your concerns have been heard and that there is a response to each of these concerns. And I just wanted to ask, in terms of enrollment and capacity, Gregory, I know you represent U&H which is a series of providers and I know UJA is on this panel. Do you feel that you have your ability to provide the capacity has been met or that you can accept more slots, more young people to your programming? We still have a need that hasn't been met. I am trying to determine capacity. Do you feel like you have capacity to enroll additional youngsters or is that not an issue for you?

GREGORY BRENDER: I think its and this is probably going to be frustrating answer. I think it

1  
2 really differs neighborhood by neighborhood. Most of  
3 the folks we have been talking to there is some under  
4 enrollment as you have seen in the numbers citywide.  
5 Whether there be enough capacity for sort of doubling  
6 of the system if it is moving towards five days a  
7 week during a situation with the school shutdown I  
8 think is a larger question, it would probably need a  
9 more significant investment to get there.

10 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay and my last question is,  
11 do you feel that there has been enough transparency  
12 and the communication has been at a level that has  
13 been responsive to the needs of the providers?

14 GREGORY BRENDER: I think there is a lead for a  
15 lot better communication. I don't know if I will get  
16 in some trouble for saying this but sometime we are  
17 learning things from the Twitter feeds of education  
18 reporters because you know, yes, are you and  
19 including from Council Members.

20 So, there is definitely a need to increase  
21 communication particularly I think when it comes to  
22 decisions around school closure and the kind of  
23 changes you know, even when Learning Labs was first  
24 proposed, a lot of folks, when they learned about it  
25 because it was a Mayoral press conference and there

1  
2 really should more direct communication with  
3 providers that really gets down to brass task of what  
4 is being asked.

5 And when the answers aren't there, there should  
6 more of an effort to bring providers to the table to  
7 help providers help the city shape what these  
8 programs will be.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you, thank you. Chair  
10 Rosenthal.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Rosenthal.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you, thank you so  
13 much and thank you to all who testified just now. I  
14 really appreciate your insights, that's how we can do  
15 anything is by learning from you. So, I really  
16 appreciate that. Just a couple of quick follow up  
17 questions to Council Member Rose's questions. I am  
18 wondering particularly for U&H and UJA, again, on the  
19 demand for seats compared to the number of seats, I  
20 am wondering if your providers keep wait lists?

21 GREGORY BRENDER: So, for Learning Labs, we don't  
22 have that option because we receive the roster,  
23 providers receive the rosters from the city. For  
24 most afterschool programs, the do keep wait lists and  
25 generally they do know the families because most

1 learning labs are being run by afterschool providers.  
2 They do know the families who they have connections  
3 with and who they have been serving in that way. But  
4 the learning labs formerly, I don't think we can have  
5 a wait list.  
6

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Right, that makes sense  
8 because you wouldn't know hypothetically who apply.  
9 To your point about the wait list on after schools  
10 could be a great proxy for that. So, that would be  
11 interesting if you can find that out. I think that  
12 would be a great proxy to hear about and yeah, so  
13 thank you. Any other thoughts on that?

14 GREGORY BRENDER: One thing that we have heard  
15 you know is that providers are hearing from the  
16 families who they have connections with who they have  
17 been serving in their afterschool programs,  
18 particularly in the situation like I think Chair Rose  
19 mentioned where the feeder school of a learning lab  
20 was on the other side of Staten Island.

21 In situations like that where the connection  
22 between the CBO and the school has some geographic  
23 distance between it. A lot of times providers are  
24 actually hearing from the families in their immediate  
25 neighborhood who traditionally they have been serving

1 through afterschool or even if they are you know,  
2 grandma's in the senior center.  
3

4 FAITH BEHUM: Especially like student with  
5 disabilities, just because a lot of the, you know,  
6 they get used to the programs that they have attended  
7 in the past and the staff and so, a lot of the people  
8 in our network have been saying that some of those  
9 kids have been - they have been matched to a Learning  
10 Lab that isn't at a UJA program where they are used  
11 to going for afterschool or whatever. And in some  
12 instances, there are some people who are matched to a  
13 different learning lab while they are also matched to  
14 an afterschool program at a UJA provider.

15 But because of where their learning lab is in  
16 location to where the UJA provider is, they can't get  
17 to either the afterschool program from the learning  
18 lab because of the lack of transportation. So, it's  
19 a missed opportunity because this is like, this  
20 individual child for instance could have had like 8  
21 a.m. to 6 p.m. care but because they were matched in  
22 that different learning lab, that option is off the  
23 table for them.

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And why do you think they  
25 were matched at that other location? Is it because

1  
2 that provider was willing to take kids with special  
3 needs, despite not being paid for it?

4 FAITH BEHUM: I don't think so, I mean, a lot of  
5 it is just how the DOE determined which kids should  
6 go to which learning labs and so, there really just  
7 has not been a say either by the providers or from  
8 the individuals, the families themselves who are  
9 sending these kids to these programs.

10 So, I was heartened to hear that DYCD, I guess  
11 they are looking at giving more family choice in the  
12 future which would I think help this problem. I  
13 think the other reason why DOE was doing this though  
14 was to keep the cohorts, like to try to have some  
15 control over keeping cohorts stagnant from certain  
16 schools. But you know, in the beginning there were  
17 some schools that were across the street from some of  
18 our programs that they weren't matched to the  
19 learning lab that was across the street from the  
20 school that they usually serve.

21 So, there is just a lot of issues like that with  
22 how the schools were matched to the learning labs and  
23 I think a lot of that is because they just weren't  
24 connected in a way that was thoughtful.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I mean, your answer  
3 implies that there are providers out there with the  
4 capability of serving kids with disabilities and you  
5 have agreed to contracts that don't pay them for the  
6 services, which is interesting.

7 FAITH BEHUM: Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And you think that your  
9 kids who need supports are getting those supports  
10 albeit at a different site?

11 FAITH BEHUM: Or they are just choosing not to  
12 participate in the program because they are not  
13 familiar with the people who are serving them in that  
14 different program and in some instances, it is a  
15 distance issue. Where the families is like, we can't  
16 get the child to that program in order for me to get  
17 to work on time or whatever.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Right, right, right,  
19 right, I mean, it strikes me that after this hearing,  
20 after what we have learned today, it would be worth  
21 sending a note to all of your participants saying  
22 reapply or submit you know, request for change.

23 FAITH BEHUM: Yeah.

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, at this juncture  
25 and I would be really curious to know two weeks from

1  
2 now or three weeks from now, whether or not they have  
3 gotten a reply. You know, that does sound just so  
4 strange.

5 Another sort of follow up question to Council  
6 Member Rose's question about food. Faith, did you  
7 hear, I didn't quite get the number when they were  
8 saying how many Kosher meals they were providing, did  
9 they say 400 meals a day? I couldn't quite hear it.

10 FAITH BEHUM: It was something with 4, I am  
11 sorry.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And I heard your comments  
13 loud and clear, so again even for that situation what  
14 we learned today is I heard the city say that a  
15 nonprofit could – a provider could go back and say,  
16 the Halal meals aren't working out, we are going to  
17 contract with our own provider and they would be open  
18 to that. I guess, what they said, was sure we are  
19 open to that, we are just not going to give you  
20 anymore money if it cost.

21 FAITH BEHUM: Right and there lies the problem,  
22 yeah, yeah. Because I mentioned this before, our  
23 PreK programs, they serve Kosher foods through their  
24 kitchens to those programs. So, like it happens  
25 through different city contracts or like the senior

1  
2 centers and you know, the same thing. They are  
3 serving meals through those other city contracts.  
4 So, this isn't something that's totally novel and  
5 hasn't been done before. It just requires -

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, the question there,  
7 I apologize, I was so excited by what you said. But  
8 then the question is those other programs for seniors  
9 or PreK, whatever, does the city's contract include  
10 full payment for those meals?

11 FAITH BEHUM: Yeah, I know like our UPK providers  
12 are saying that in particular because yeah, at the  
13 DCC's for instance, they are saying you know, how  
14 their four year old's get these nice warm little  
15 meals of like soup and like a nice little side and  
16 like the Learning Lab kids are getting these just  
17 cold tuna salad, egg salad, hummus and carrots, you  
18 know.

19 So, and there are some days where our providers  
20 are like, I cannot serve this to our children and  
21 they will buy cheap pizza or they will try to cater  
22 it through their own kitchens but again, they are not  
23 getting compensated on those days that they make  
24 those decisions to do that.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: It would be interesting  
3 and it is 400 or whatever the number is, do you think  
4 yeah, that's right, it might be worth doing the math  
5 and finding out the difference and then you know, we  
6 could make a special plea for that. Although, we  
7 won't be capturing all sites but it might be  
8 interesting.

9 And the other question that we didn't follow up  
10 with but I wonder about, they did not say whether or  
11 not they are providing Halal meals. I wonder for  
12 students who require a Halal meal whether or not that  
13 is open to them.

14 FAITH BEHUM: Yeah, maybe.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: So, I wanted to ask Faith  
16 for you and for Gregory, do your providers - I think  
17 maybe you already answered this but do your providers  
18 who are equipped with the supports or the para's,  
19 have any - do you have any placements of those kids  
20 from DOE?

21 FAITH BEHUM: So, we have - the thing is that,  
22 like one of our agencies in particular we have been  
23 talking a lot about this who need the extra one on  
24 one. They could bring the one on one's in. So, they  
25 have had kids who are placed with them who have this

1  
2 need for the one on one support, it is just they  
3 don't have the money to pay those Para Professionals  
4 to be there to help them do the one on one support  
5 when they are doing the remote learning.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Got it and so, the  
7 organization makes the decision maybe kid by kid.

8 FAITH BEHUM: Right, so this organization has  
9 reached out to DYCD and said like, well, we have the  
10 ability, we actually have the staff here who could do  
11 this but we would have to be paid for these extra  
12 people who are helping out and so far, there hasn't  
13 been any budget on like increasing the rates or  
14 anything now.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Right, I mean, what I  
16 heard today was reach back again because it sounded  
17 like they are now paying attention and trying to  
18 resolve issues about these - to help these children.  
19 So, I think you know, if this week they are paying  
20 attention to it, this is the week to reach out again  
21 and appeal, you know put in appeals for this.

22 And then, let's see, oh, one quick last question,  
23 Gregory you were talking about the challenges with  
24 the communication with DOE. Do you have specific  
25

1  
2 suggestions on how the city could better communicate  
3 details?

4 GREGORY BRENDER: I think some of it is – they  
5 have been doing fall, what they are calling Fall  
6 Learning Series from DYCD. I think having more  
7 opportunity for open questions, so allowing the  
8 providers to speak and speak more on these and come  
9 back I think would be helpful. Also, just getting  
10 you know, at least contingency plans in advance. So,  
11 knowing for example the schools may close. Having  
12 some information prior and I understand we may be  
13 hearing about this soon but knowing that this was a  
14 possibility two months ago, creating those  
15 contingency plans and saying well, we don't know  
16 every single number that will be in here, here in the  
17 basic plans that you need to know. And basically  
18 also just updating via email. Like, letting folks  
19 know when there is new guidance and having as clear  
20 guidance as possible.

21 FAITH BEHUM: I think to just like reiterate, not  
22 reiterate but to highlight the early childhood  
23 education department through DOE has been sending out  
24 bulletins since the beginning of the pandemic and  
25 like, you know, sometimes there is a bunch of new

1  
2 information in there that is really helpful to  
3 providers. We send them out a few times a week and I  
4 don't even think like, Gregory said, I don't even  
5 think anything that elaborate has to be said, I think  
6 like just more emails. Even just like frequently  
7 asked question documents I think would be helpful. A  
8 lot of these things have just not been put into  
9 writing for providers.

10 So, like, people are just scrambling at the last  
11 minute when things do change, when the school does go  
12 remote or when if anything goes remote, all the  
13 schools go remote, like, really what does that mean  
14 for the learning labs in our programs? So, they will  
15 reach out to their program managers individually at  
16 DYCD but it would just be helpful if there was more  
17 universal language. This is the game plan, this is  
18 what you need to do which is just not, it is lacking  
19 right now, in my opinion.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: So, what you are saying  
21 and we receive many of those eblasts as well with  
22 information. For example, we get weekly updates from  
23 Department of Social Services but they are 20 pages  
24 long and I hardly read them anymore and it really  
25 would be great if right at the top, it would say, for

1  
2 the week of blah, blah, here are the top three  
3 changes that have been –

4 FAITH BEHUM: Yeah, yeah, I need something like  
5 that Gregory.

6 GREGORY BRENDER: Yeah, absolutely.

7 FAITH BEHUM: Just like you know, even and I  
8 think again, like, DOE, the Early Childhood  
9 Bulletin's have done a decent job and they even have  
10 like a place online where you can look at past  
11 bulletins. That has been really helpful. You know  
12 but again, I don't even know if you need anything  
13 that elaborate. I think like what you said Council  
14 Member, just like top three things you need to know  
15 this week. Maybe there isn't anything you need to  
16 know this week but like, usually there is because we  
17 are in the middle of a pandemic, so.

18 GREGORY BRENDER: I would second that.

19 FAITH BEHUM: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: So, I am glad the Admin  
21 is still on. And then, one thing you just, the way  
22 you answered this question Faith about how if you are  
23 regular provider, the information is in there. What  
24 happens for providers who are not, you know, the new  
25 contracted providers, do they get any updates since



1  
2 they are not part of the system or do they get an  
3 update that is – and you might not know the answer to  
4 this question but do they get an update that is  
5 specific just for Learning Labs Bridges? Do they get  
6 the whole update for Early Childhood? Do we know?

7 FAITH BEHUM: Yeah, I am unsure. I don't know.  
8 Gregory, if you know that answer.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah, my guess is all of  
10 your providers didn't have contracts.

11 FAITH BEHUM: Yeah, we didn't have any and we had  
12 some providers that were, they are not DYCD providers  
13 and they looked into the program and in the end, they  
14 just decided like, this is way beyond what we can do  
15 right now and decided not to go for the RFI when it  
16 was introduced. But all of our providers are current  
17 DYCD providers.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Right, right, I mean  
19 again, it might be worth suggesting to your providers  
20 and I am going to do this with mine that they look at  
21 it again because it sounds like it has gotten you  
22 know, improved on over time and perhaps now there is  
23 clearer guidance and it might be easier, who knows.

1  
2 GREGORY BRENDER: I also would like to add that  
3 they should be emailing the testing rates  
4 particularly as they come closer to 3 percent.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: In other words you are  
6 saying each individual provider should get the  
7 information about their own testing rates?

8 GREGORY BRENDER: But also citywide since that  
9 influences what the citywide decisions are going to  
10 be.

11 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Got it. Yeah, you could  
12 see that being the top thing on the regular updates.  
13 City rate is you know, 2.999. Okay that is super  
14 helpful. Again, thank you all for the work that you  
15 do, it is extraordinary.

16 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: That's all my questions.  
18 I really appreciate everyone on the panel here.  
19 Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Before we go back to Chair  
21 Rose, if I could just ask if there are any Council  
22 Members who are present who have questions. If you  
23 can please use the raise hand function in Zoom. We  
24 are noting no Council Member questions and then  
25 before also handing it back to Chair Rose, at this

1  
2 point, we have concluded public testimony if there  
3 are no other questions. So, if we inadvertently  
4 missed anyone that would like to testify, if you can  
5 also, if those individuals could please use the raise  
6 hand function in Zoom.

7 I am noting that Ms. Soodeen, Felicia Soodeen has  
8 raised her hand.

9 FELICIA SOODEEN: Sorry, can everyone hear me?

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, Ms. Soodeen, so go  
11 ahead, thank you. Ms. Soodeen, oh, you are muted  
12 again. We can hear you.

13 FELICIA SOODEEN: Thank you, sorry, I just wanted  
14 to make sure. Can everyone hear me without the echo?  
15 Great. So, based on today's testimony, I just wanted  
16 to give a little bit of remarks because you know,  
17 based on what I am hearing, you know, the Seamen's  
18 has done a lot of work in the community you know  
19 serving children. When they talked about the  
20 disenfranchised children that are being served better  
21 in foster care or in prevention services, those are  
22 the families that we have been serving for such, you  
23 know a long time. Our staff, we have licensed  
24 clinical social workers. We have you know, staff who  
25 have education, all of our staff, actually that would

1  
2 have been working in the program are cleared and have  
3 a background clearance and so, you know, that ability  
4 to be able to continue to serve you know, the  
5 community is of utmost importance.

6       You know, our healthcare management includes  
7 nurses and so, we have these capabilities on staff  
8 through the continuum of care that we provide and for  
9 us to not be able to have the opportunity you know,  
10 given the need of the community is just so you know,  
11 unfortunate and is just want to thank everyone who  
12 has given you know, Seamen's Society over the years  
13 the support that's needed, so that we can continue to  
14 do the services that we are doing.

15       I commend every single agency that is on here and  
16 every provider because we have kept our doors open to  
17 the children every single day in fear for our own  
18 lives and have done this safely, right. Like, if  
19 there is anything that we can say that has gone well,  
20 is the fact that we have done this successfully with  
21 little to minimum exposure, right. And so, that just  
22 speaks volumes to the dedication that we have to the  
23 communities that we serve. And I just think that it  
24 is only fair that everyone get an opportunity who is  
25

1  
2 invested in the community be able to do that with the  
3 resources and the supports that's needed.

4 And so, I just wanted to add that to the  
5 testimony because I just think it is so important.  
6 You know, how do you fight to like serve your own  
7 community? That's like absolutely insane but I  
8 commend every single person on this call today.

9 So, thank you for your time.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. I am  
11 going to return it to Chair Rose.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, I just want to thank all  
13 of the panelists. I want to thank you for the work  
14 that you are doing. That it is often times very  
15 hard, tedious and unappreciated sometimes. I just  
16 want you to know that we really appreciate what you  
17 are doing. We appreciate that you have challenges  
18 that are not of your own doing. That you fight real  
19 hard every day to overcome some barriers that some  
20 artificial, some that seem insurmountable but you  
21 keep going on to serve the young people in our  
22 communities.

23 So, I want to first thank you all. You know, I  
24 want to say to Seamen's Society, we are going to  
25 follow up with DYCD to see if and how this can be you

1  
2 know, addressed and to Gregory and Faith, you know,  
3 thank you. You have always risen to the occasion  
4 despite all of the obstacles that you know, that seem  
5 to be placed in your way and I want to thank you for  
6 that. For continuing you know, the tenacity to work  
7 with this Committee and to work with City  
8 Administration to deliver services.

9 I want to thank my Co-Chair Helen Rosenthal for  
10 you know, her wonderful you know, in depth, hard  
11 hitting questioning. I want to thank you for helping  
12 us get to the root, no, no, no, no. I want to thank  
13 you for helping us get to the root of these issues  
14 and I know that we are going to be able to work  
15 together.

16 It is so important, you know, women are really  
17 the backbone. Women constitute a large number of the  
18 workforce and they are being you know,  
19 disproportionately impacted once again by the lack of  
20 you know, their ability to find safe places for their  
21 children to be while they work because out of  
22 necessity, not because of something that they just  
23 want to enhance their economic standing.

24 And so, with that, I want to thank the  
25 Administration for you know, for their diligence in

1  
2 working to meet the need. The need is great and you  
3 know, my only issue is that we need to expedite it  
4 you know, as quickly as possible. No child, no  
5 child, should be left out there without the necessary  
6 services and especially since we apparently have the  
7 ability to deliver those services.

8 So, I want to thank you all for being here and  
9 being a part of this Committee and this hearing today  
10 and I assure you that there is going to be ample  
11 follow up and that we will make whatever answers we  
12 get available to all of the participants in this  
13 hearing today.

14 With that, this hearing – Helen, do you want to  
15 say anything? No, okay.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Rosenthal is shaking  
17 her head no for the record.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, alright, so, with that,  
19 this meeting is adjourned at 1:28 p.m. [GAVEL] Thank  
20 you.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date November 30, 2020