

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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June 29, 2022
Start: 1:13 p.m.
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HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING - COMMITTEE ROOM -
CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Tiffany Cabán, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

James F. Gennaro
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Kristin Richardson Jordan
Kevin C. Riley

A P P E A R A N C E S

Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director of New York City's Commission of Gender Equity

Simone Hawkins, Chief Executive of Early Childhood Education Operations at the Department of Education

Corinne Schiff, Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Health at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Elizabeth Wolkomir, Deputy Commissioner at the Division of Child and Family Well-Being at the Administration for Children Services

Eliana Godoy

Lisa Zucker

Chris Bennett

Steven Morales

Elvan Sahin

Julian Kline

Katrice Thomas

Latisha McNeill

Gregory Brender

Sage Schaftel

2 SERGEANT BIONDO: Microphone test. Today's
3 date June 29, 2022. Committee on Women and Gender
4 Equity being recorded by John Biondo. Committee Room
5 - City Hall.

6 At this time, will our Zoom host please
7 start the webinar? Once again, Zoom host, please
8 start our webinar.

9 ZOOM HOST: Webinar started.

10 SERGEANT BIONDO: Thank you. Good
11 afternoon and welcome to today's hybrid New York City
12 Council hearing for the Committee on Women and Gender
13 Equity. We ask all panelists and folks in the public
14 if you have any electronic devices, please set it to
15 silent or vibrate.

16 If you'd like to submit testimony, please
17 send via email to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again,
18 that is testimony@council.nyc.gov.

19 Thank you for your cooperation. Chair
20 Caban, we are ready to begin.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. [GAVEL]
22 Good morning, everyone. My name is Tiffany Caban, my
23 pronounces are she/her, and I am the Chair of the
24 Committee on Women and Gender Equity.

2 Childcare is not only one of the pressing
3 issues this Committee will be deliberating this year
4 but, indeed, one of the most pressing issues facing
5 the city. Today, my Colleagues and I are taking a
6 bold step to address this crisis by hearing a package
7 of legislation related to childcare in New York City.
8 It includes Intro 242 sponsored by Council Member
9 Gutierrez and related to the establishment of a
10 Marshall plan for a moms task force, Intro 477
11 sponsored by Council Member Hudson establishing a
12 childcare task for, Intro 485 sponsored by Council
13 Member Menin related to an electronic childcare
14 directory, Intro 486 sponsored by, again, Council
15 Member Menin related to establishing a childcare
16 advisory board, and the next few pieces also
17 sponsored by Council Member Menin, 487 related to
18 establishing a childcare subsidy information portal,
19 488 related to establishing a childcare program fund,
20 489 related to childcare certification program, and
21 Intro 526 of which I am the sponsor related to
22 childcare services at public meetings, and finally
23 Resolution 69 sponsored by Council Member Menin
24 related to supporting the provision of financial
25 assistance to families and childcare providers in

2 order to make childcare more accessible and
3 affordable. So much about our city's health, safety,
4 and prosperity depends on more and better childcare.
5 Our economy depends on working parents being able to
6 work without worrying about their children. Our
7 childcare workforce, overwhelmingly women of color,
8 depends on good jobs and good wages with good labor
9 protections. The future of our city depends on
10 children having the high-quality care they need to
11 develop into healthy, thriving adults. I'm encouraged
12 by the administration's stated commitment to
13 expanding access to childcare and have been proud to
14 have worked with our Mayor to finally expand access
15 to childcare to our undocumented neighbors. This
16 effort taken alongside parents, providers, and
17 advocates should serve as a model of what a truly
18 universal, accessible, and equitable childcare system
19 can be. It is with this commitment that as the Chair
20 as the Committee on Women and Gender Equity I'm proud
21 to hold this hearing today on this vital subject and
22 these important pieces of legislation.

23 Before we move to statement from my
24 Colleague, Council Member Menin, I would also like to
25 thank my staff including Stephanie Silkowski, my

2 Chief-of-Staff, and Madhuri Shukla, my Legislative
3 Director. Additionally, thank you to the Committee
4 staff for their work in preparing this hearing and
5 working on the legislation including Brenda McKinney,
6 Committee Counsel, Anastassia Zimina, Legislative
7 Policy Analyst, Jessica Foong, Senior Legislative
8 Counsel, and Eisha Wright, Finance Unit Head.

9 Finally, I also want to acknowledge one
10 of our Committee Members who is present, Council
11 Member Richardson Jordan. Thank you.

12 I will turn it over to my Colleague, and
13 then you'll administer the oath?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much,
15 Chair Caban, for holding this incredibly important
16 hearing today on childcare. Childcare is a national
17 crisis in this country. Parents and guardians have
18 fewer and fewer choices for childcare with ever-
19 increasing costs. The average childcare cost in New
20 York City for infants below 18 months is over 21,000
21 dollars per year according to the Office of the New
22 York City Comptroller. For toddlers between 18 and 24
23 months, it's at least 16,000 dollars per year.
24 Childcare should not be determined by your income; it
25 should be determined simply by need, and the needs of

2 parents and guardians, of childcare workers, of
3 childcare providers are being unmet. My 5 bills
4 before the Committee would advance New York City
5 toward universal childcare for all.

6 Intro 486, a childcare advisory board,
7 which has a supermajority of cosponsors I want to say
8 at 36 Members, would have the power and duty to make
9 recommendations on legislation, regulation, policies,
10 procedures, and initiatives to make childcare more
11 affordable and advance New York City on a 5-year plan
12 to implement universal childcare. The 7 members of
13 the childcare advisory board including designees from
14 the Mayor, the Speaker, Comptroller, public advocate,
15 Department of Education, Department of Health, and
16 ACS. The board would be required to submit an annual
17 report to the Mayor and City Council on how to
18 improve and address problems childcare providers face
19 and make it more affordable, including reviewing and
20 assessing universal childcare and subsidies to
21 families.

22 Intro 484, which also has a supermajority
23 of cosponsors, would create an electronic childcare
24 directory.

2 Intro 487, which also has a supermajority
3 of cosponsors, would require the creation of a
4 website with information related to city, state, and
5 federal subsidies.

6 Intro 488 would award grants of up to
7 20,000 dollars per childcare facility if they are at
8 risk of closure or displacement.

9 Finally, Intro 489 would have the Mayor
10 designate an agency for a childcare certification
11 program. Specifically, this would be for building
12 owners hosting childcare facilities. Developing a
13 childcare certified building program will maintain
14 and increase the number of eligible childcare
15 facilities in the City of New York.

16 Let me just say as a mother of 4 and a
17 working mom, I know the importance of childcare. From
18 2015 to 2020, at least 1,100 childcare centers have
19 closed. Childcare providers have cited numerous
20 problems, ranging from financial costs to the time
21 needed for background checks. Parents and guardians
22 shouldn't be punished for these issues, and it is our
23 job to resolve this ongoing crisis. This is one of
24 the wealthiest cities in the world, and we need to
25 prioritize working families, small businesses,

2 childcare workers and centers in our recovery. I'm so
3 thankful that a majority of my Colleagues, a
4 supermajority, have signed onto these bills to stand
5 with us today and demand universal childcare.

6 I really want to thank the administration
7 because I know they have made a really strong effort
8 on promoting universal childcare, and I look forward
9 to the testimony today. Thank you so much to the
10 Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I also want
12 to acknowledge Council Member and Colleague, Council
13 Member Gutierrez, and invite you to make a statement
14 as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Thank you,
16 Chair. By default, New York City public school
17 teachers do not get paid leave when they have a baby
18 despite, or perhaps in spite of, the fact that over
19 75 percent of teachers are women and any paid leave
20 is negotiated through collective bargaining and even
21 still it is extremely limited.

22 Nurses by default do not get paid leave
23 when they have a baby regardless of whether they are
24 a private or public employee. Their healthcare
25 employee may not choose to offer paid family leave in

2 New York, 95 percent of nurses are women. I provide
3 these examples of women we called essential workers
4 not very long ago because, as we were cheering for
5 them and saying thank you, we were never really
6 providing the support they needed and asked for. It
7 has always been difficult to be a working mom, but,
8 particularly in light of the issues that have become
9 more acute during the pandemic, it's critical to
10 create a new framework of support as we enter a new
11 normal, both in the workplace and in our daily lives.
12 I'm proud that today my bill, the Marshall Plan for
13 Moms, will be heard by this Committee and we can
14 begin the work of better understanding and developing
15 recommendations on how to truly support working
16 mothers and caregivers.

17 I also want to give a shoutout to all the
18 people who made the Marshall Plan for Working Moms
19 possible. I am not the first, I am not the pioneer,
20 I'm also not the first working mom so I want to pay
21 my respects to all the working moms and working
22 parents before me, and this is going to be, I think,
23 a really exciting hearing and an opportunity as a
24 majority women Council to create spaces for ourselves

2 and demand the respect and dignified working
3 conditions that we all deserve. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: At this point, we
5 will administer the oath to the administration. If
6 you can please raise your right hand.

7 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
8 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
9 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
10 questions today?

11 ADMINISTRATION: I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Great. Thank you.
13 At this point, we can move to testimony. Thank you.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Thank you so
15 much. Good afternoon, Chair Caban and Members of the
16 Committee on Women and Gender Equity. I am Jacqueline
17 Ebanks, my pronouns are she and her, and I am
18 Executive Director of New York City's Commission on
19 Gender Equity. In this role, I also serve as an
20 advisor to the Mayor on policies and issues affecting
21 gender equity in New York City for all girls, women,
22 transgender, and gender nonbinary New Yorkers
23 regardless of their physical and mental abilities,
24 age, ethnicity, or race, their faith, gender

2 expression, immigrant status, sexual orientation, and
3 socioeconomic status.

4 After my testimony today, I will be
5 joined by Simone Hawkins, Chief Executive of Early
6 Childhood Education Operations at the Department of
7 Education, Corinne Schiff, Deputy Commissioner for
8 Environmental Health at the Department of Health and
9 Mental Hygiene, and Elizabeth Wolkomir, Deputy
10 Commissioner at the Division of Child and Family
11 Well-Being at the Administration for Children
12 Services. We all will respond to the questions you
13 have after testimony.

14 As New York City recovers from the
15 debilitating impacts of COVID-19, the Adams'
16 administration is committed to building an inclusive
17 and equitable city for all New Yorkers. It is within
18 this context that CGE works to remove equity barriers
19 across the city and carries out its activities in 3
20 areas of focus within a human rights framework and
21 using an intersectional lens.

22 Our areas of focus are:

23 1 - Economic mobility and opportunity
24 where we pursue a goal to create a city where all
25 people of all gender identities and gender

expressions live economically secure lives and have access to opportunities to thrive.

2 - Our second area of focus is health and reproductive justice. We pursue the goal to foster a city free from gender- and race-based health disparities.

3 - Finally, our third area of focus is safety where we seek to foster a city free from gender- and race-based violence.

The Adams' administration is committed to supporting cis women, transgender, and gender nonbinary and nonconforming caregivers as they raise the next generation of New Yorkers. Research indicates that in low-income communities the average annual cost of center or home-based childcare in New York City can constitute as much as 36 to 65 percent of median household income. The high-cost burden of childcare coupled with the lack of flexible and supportive work policies can hinder parents and caregivers from participating in the economy, especially women. Even when they do participate, they can face pay disparities based on caregiver status and gender, which further entrenches inequities. Last year, a report from the Economic Development

Corporation estimated the financial impact of New York City parents leaving the workforce due to a lack of childcare to be 2.2 billion in tax revenues. This further highlights the link between childcare and the city's post-pandemic recovery. This administration recognizes that achieving an equitable economic recovery requires a stronger childcare infrastructure and better compensation and recognition of caregivers while addressing the discrimination they face.

The landscape of childcare services across New York City includes center-based, home-based, pre-K, 3 through K, and private care services that are not subsidized. Four agencies play a role in supporting and regulating these kinds of care. The Administration for Children Services, ACS, administers the Childcare Block Grant Funding from the state, which consists largely of federal funds. This includes funding childcare assistance for families receiving cash assistance through the Human Resources Administration as mandated as well as providing vouchers to low-income families, unhoused New Yorkers, and child welfare-involved families. ACS also transfers 125 million of the Child Care Block Grant Funding each year to the Department of

2 Education to help fund contracted childcare including
3 Extended Day and EarlyLearn. In addition to
4 contracting for Extended Day and EarlyLearn
5 subsidized care, the DOE contracts and provides pre-K
6 to 4 year olds and 3-K to 3 year olds during the
7 school day and administers the Head Start grant. HRA
8 helps families who receive cash assistance and who
9 are working or going to school to access childcare
10 either through contracts or vouches. Finally, the
11 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene regulates
12 childcare including monitoring with health and safety
13 requirements.

14 Yesterday, the administration released a
15 Blueprint for Childcare and Early Childhood Education
16 which lays out our plans to expand equitable access
17 to affordable, high-quality childcare. The Blueprint
18 includes common sense initiatives for a quality
19 system that supports family and childcare providers.
20 This Blueprint is just the beginning of our work to
21 make childcare high quality, affordable, and
22 accessible. It sets goals to:

23 1 - Increase access to childcare
24 assistance for thousands of children across New York
25 City including children in high-need neighborhoods,

2 children living in temporary housing, and children
3 whose immigration status precludes them from
4 receiving state and federally funded care.

5 2 - We seek to make care more affordable
6 by reducing the amount families receiving subsidized
7 care contribute towards their childcare.

8 3 - We wish to increase capacity by
9 creating more childcare and early education seats by
10 leveraging tax abatements and credits to facilitate
11 additional capacity.

12 4 - We want to improve the process for
13 families by creating a single online childcare
14 application portal to make applying for childcare
15 easier.

16 5 - Our goal is also to enhance supports
17 for the childcare workforce, to reduce administrative
18 burden, create more financial stability, and achieve
19 higher quality care.

20 6 - We want to grow a highly qualified
21 childcare workforce by widening access to provided
22 career advancement and expanding opportunities for
23 early childhood professionals to earn higher
24 education credentials in partnership with CUNY's New
25

2 York Early Childhood Professional Development
3 Institute.

4 7 - We want to leverage leadership from
5 City Hall and the community by establishing a new
6 centralized Childcare and Early Childhood Education
7 Office and convening an advisory group to ensure we
8 are working hand-in-hand with the community and
9 childcare providers who serve our families every day.

10 In addition to developing the Blueprint,
11 Mayor Adams also successfully advocated this year for
12 a number of measures at the state level to improve
13 childcare and support families in New York City. For
14 example, the Mayor championed an enhancement to the
15 Earned Income Tax Credit in the New York State budget
16 and committed to increasing the city's annual
17 investment to EITC to help put more money back in the
18 pockets of families. The administration also
19 advocated for the state to increase the income
20 eligibility for families to receive subsidized
21 childcare from 200 percent to 300 percent of the
22 federal poverty line. Therefore, starting in August
23 2022, a family of 4 earning up to 83,250 dollars can
24 access subsidized childcare as opposed to just
25 families earning less than 55,500. We will continue

2 to advocate for the State to eliminate the need for
3 families to be earning at least minimum wage in order
4 to be eligible for childcare as well as fight for the
5 State to enable counties to use state dollars to
6 provide childcare for undocumented children. The
7 administration is grateful for the partnership of
8 this Council including the Chair of the Committee to
9 include 10 million dollars in the FY 2023 City Budget
10 for ACS to develop a new program to provide childcare
11 to undocumented children.

12 In closing, I'd like to offer a few
13 comments on some of the bills being considered today.
14 We appreciate the intent of the legislative package
15 and look forward to discussing these bills further
16 with Council.

17 Intro 242. This bill would create a
18 Marshall Plan for Moms task force chaired by the
19 Commission on Gender Equity. Its purpose would be to
20 study, develop, and issue proposals and
21 recommendations on how to support working mothers and
22 caregivers given the vulnerabilities exposed by the
23 pandemic. We appreciate the intent of this bill and
24 look forward to working with Council on this further.

Intro 474 and Intro 486. Both of these bills would establish task forces or advisory bodies to examine challenges and issue recommendations around childcare access and provision. The administration appreciates the intent behind both bills and agrees that bringing government, providers, parents, and advocates together to work on these issues is critical. As outlined in Mayor Adams' Blueprint released yesterday, the administration intends to establish a solutions-oriented advisory board, which we believe can fulfil the goals of these 2 bills. We look forward to discussing this further with Council and to identifying alignment across our shared goals.

Intro 485. This bill would require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Office of Technology and Innovation to collaborate on a website that provides a list and search function for childcare providers operating in New York City. DOHMH already offers such a website. It's called Childcare Connect, and the administration supports codification of this important resource. We are also happy to share more information about Childcare

2 Connect with Council including how families can
3 access this resource.

4 Intro 487. This bill would require the
5 Administration for Children Services, the Department
6 of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Office of
7 Technology and Innovation to create an online portal
8 informing the public of childcare subsidies. The
9 administration wholeheartedly agrees that parents and
10 caregivers should not have to navigate complex
11 bureaucracy to get their children care. That is why
12 the first major application of the MyCity web portal
13 will be a single, unified application process for all
14 subsidized childcare options offered by the city. The
15 administration is committed to developing and
16 implementing solutions that will ensure families can
17 seamlessly navigate care options. We look forward to
18 keeping the Council informed on our progress as we
19 move ahead with this project.

20 Intro 488. The bill would require ACS to
21 establish a Childcare Program Fund to award grants of
22 up to 20,000 dollars to childcare programs at
23 significant risk of closure or displacement in the
24 city. We agree that it is essential that we support
25 childcare providers. The city has taken several

2 important steps to ensure the financial stability of
3 our providers, which are outlined in the city's
4 Childcare and Early Childhood Blueprint that we
5 released yesterday. First, we successfully advocated
6 to Albany to increase the maximum amount we can
7 reimburse childcare providers and made it easier for
8 providers to apply for those higher reimbursement
9 rates. In addition, throughout the pandemic we have
10 continued to pay providers for days that children are
11 absent including due to illness, and we are committed
12 to continuing to listen to providers and families.
13 They will be key partners in the Childcare Advisory
14 Council we are standing up.

15 Intro 489. This bill would require the
16 Mayor to designate an administering agency to create
17 a childcare certification program so buildings can
18 apply to be recognized as a childcare certified
19 building. We share the same goals as Council when it
20 comes to expanding access to childcare, and we look
21 forward to discussing this with you further.

22 Intro 526. This bill would require the
23 provision of childcare services upon request for
24 certain meetings open to the public. The
25 administration recognizes the importance of

2 increasing civic engagement opportunities for
3 caregivers, many of whom are women, and extending
4 childcare services throughout the city with this in
5 mind. The administration has concerns on the
6 complexity of delivering the proposed childcare
7 services due to location licensing and the varied
8 frequency of need and requests of service providers.
9 We would like to discuss this bill further with
10 Council.

11 In conclusion, the Adams' administration
12 understands the critical importance of strengthening
13 the childcare sector for families, workers, and New
14 York City's post-pandemic recovery. The Blueprint
15 released yesterday charts a course towards achieving
16 greater access to affordable, high-quality childcare
17 and building a system that is innovative and
18 supportive of both families and providers. Thank you
19 for the opportunity to testify here today. We are
20 happy to answer any questions you may have and look
21 forward to continuing this dialogue. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I'd like to
23 take a moment to acknowledge that we have been joined
24 by Council Member Riley.

2 I'd like to start with just some general
3 questions. I think it makes sense to start with some
4 of the overall challenges. What are the greatest
5 challenges facing the provision of childcare in New
6 York City and what about for the youngest children or
7 related to afterschool programs as example?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: I'm sorry,
9 Chair. I didn't hear.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: That's okay. Sorry. I
11 want to start with overall challenges so kind of
12 start broad and narrow a bit. What are the greatest
13 challenges facing the provision of childcare in New
14 York City, particularly what about for the youngest
15 children, what are the biggest challenges related to
16 afterschool programs, etc.?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: As I
18 mentioned, we have this network of 4 agencies that
19 provide the varied types of services, and so what is
20 key to us in this work as we move forward is
21 collaboration and really working together to ensure
22 seamless service delivery. As you point out, there
23 are challenges, and so, with that, I'm going to turn
24 over to my colleagues at ACS, DOHMH, and DOE to talk
25 about those issues.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Good

3 morning. Elizabeth Wolkomir. My pronouns are she/her.

4 I'm the Deputy Commissioner for Child and Family

5 Well-Being at the Administration for Children

6 Services. The challenges and those that we're seeking

7 to address in the Blueprint that we released

8 yesterday are ensuring that caregivers across the

9 city have adequate access to subsidized care, meaning

10 affordable care, given the cost of childcare

11 throughout the city, and, as my colleague addressed,

12 we have addressed that in the Blueprint that was

13 released yesterday across our continuum of care. We

14 also agree that it is really critical to make sure

15 that our providers are well-supported and have

16 adequate funding. We have done a few things in that

17 regard. One is to advocate to Albany successfully to

18 ensure that we can provide the maximum reimbursable

19 rate allowable to our providers and to make it easier

20 to apply for that rate. We also think it's really

21 critical to ensure that it is easier for families to

22 apply, which is why we are creating a single front

23 door application and portal where families can

24 understand their options and can apply for care. We

25 know that we need to continue to be focused on

2 quality, which is why we are investing in the
3 workforce and career development opportunities for
4 the workforce.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Good
6 afternoon. Corinne Schiff, she/her. I'm the Deputy
7 Commissioner for Environmental Health. I think that
8 my colleague from ACS has really addressed a broad
9 range of challenges as have the Chair and the Council
10 Members. I don't have anything to add but look
11 forward to the ongoing conversation about the
12 details. Thank you.

13 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: It's always so
14 difficult to talk with a mask on. Good afternoon.
15 Simone Hawkins, Chief Executive of EC Operations at
16 New York City DOE. Also nothing to add, but we are
17 definitely champions in line with all of you and our
18 colleagues here to move this work forward.

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: If I could
20 also add, the robust investment in collaboration
21 across the city from all stakeholders and so you see
22 the advisory group being created in an office. I
23 think we want to make sure that all stakeholders have
24 a voice and contribute to the improvement of our
25 systems and to increasing access and deepening the

2 resources we give to our youngest New Yorkers, 0 to
3 5, and I think that is fully reflected and the
4 Mayor's Blueprint is really a comprehensive launch
5 and it's only a beginning. We intend to learn from
6 these opportunities of engagement and then to build
7 on that to give New Yorkers what they deserve in this
8 area of childcare.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. My next
10 question, I think, is one that most folks in the room
11 intimately understand the importance of but I think
12 it's important for the administration to articulate
13 this for the record and for the public, but why is
14 childcare important for working families and women in
15 particular?

16 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: I'm sorry. I know
17 you're in the mask.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: I'm sorry. It's okay.
19 I apologize. I'm going to be keeping my mask on the
20 entire hearing so I will try to speak a little bit
21 more clearly. I apologize. I was just saying that I
22 know the answer to this question I know is one that
23 is intimately clear to most of the people in the
24 room, but I do believe it's important for the
25 administration to articulate it, and that is why is

2 childcare important for working families and women in
3 particular?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: At the
5 Commission on Gender Equity, we talk about these 3
6 areas of focus, economic mobility and opportunity,
7 health and reproductive justice, and safety as being
8 interconnected. In the complexity of human lives,
9 what people strive for and what a city strive to do
10 is to ensure that every New Yorker has the
11 opportunity to be economically secure, to be healthy,
12 to have full autonomy over their reproductive lives,
13 and to be safe. Childcare is the beginning of that
14 investment, and one could argue from prenatal care.
15 it's how we care about the future of our city. We
16 want to make sure as a city and as the Adams'
17 administration we are there for those most
18 vulnerable. We're there for all our citizens, but
19 there's a particular vulnerability and also
20 particular opportunity to strengthen the future if we
21 invest deeply and consistently in childcare, and I
22 think that's what you're seeing here for our
23 administration, that no child, no individual in our
24 city will go unattended to and abandoned if you will
25 because this city and this administration will be

2 here laying down long-term solutions for their care
3 and their well-being.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Do you believe that
5 the city is providing adequate coverage for those who
6 need childcare, and why or why not?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: I think that's
8 what the plan indicates. We know there's a gap, a gap
9 that we've inherited, and, as a part of this journey,
10 we now have to take up that issue and close the gap
11 to the best of our ability and as much as possible so
12 the Blueprint is that effort. It's a start to closing
13 the gap, to remediating the past and the failures
14 therein, and to moving forward, to building as well
15 on the successes of the past and extending those
16 successes. What you see in that Blueprint is really
17 this effort to move forward to be there for the
18 youngest New Yorkers in a holistic way. I can
19 emphasize that enough. I think we've all pointed to
20 the data, we've pointed to the vulnerability of
21 mothers, we've pointed to the vulnerability of
22 caregivers from an economic perspective, the pandemic
23 underscored those vulnerabilities, and I think we all
24 recognize our responsibility to create positive

2 change so that, as a society, we're better prepared
3 for future events such as this.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I'll just
5 add that the Mayor was very clear in the announcement
6 yesterday that the goal and value of this
7 administration is to move towards universal childcare
8 and that these efforts are a first step in that
9 direction and a huge one that will touch more than
10 41,000 children but that there is an understanding
11 that we need to continue the drumbeat towards
12 universal care.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: I'd like to dig into
14 those details. When we talk about there's a gap, we
15 want to fill it, there's a desire to do that, we want
16 to take these steps, what are the steps, what steps
17 can the city take to expand the number of childcare
18 providers and the number of seats in childcare
19 programs?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Sure. I'll
21 speak at a high level about the Blueprint and the
22 pieces that are in there and will defer to my
23 colleagues as well. The Blueprint both seeks to
24 expand subsidy to families, particularly low-income
25 families in high-need areas or in particularly

2 vulnerable circumstances so the Administration for
3 Children Services will be expanding subsidized
4 vouchers for childcare assistance to over 18,000
5 children, and that includes moving through the
6 waitlist that we have already made significant
7 progress on. That includes targeting 17 high-need...

8 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: How large is the
9 waitlist?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I'm sorry.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: How large is the
12 waitlist?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: The
14 waitlist when we began doing this work was 35,000
15 children. I should be clear that the waitlist is not
16 necessarily children that are eligible or families
17 that haven't in the interim received another option
18 for childcare which is to say that we are in the
19 process of offering childcare to every family of the
20 children on that list. Of those 35,000 children,
21 we've already reached out to the families of 28,000
22 children, and, by September, we will have moved
23 through the entire waitlist.

24 In addition, we are pursuing access
25 expansion for childcare assistance through vouchers

1 in the 17 highest need community districts in the
2 city, and these are community districts that have the
3 highest rates of poverty, including child poverty,
4 the highest rates of unemployment, and that
5 inadequate access to childcare today. We are also
6 focused on continuing our work to offer childcare
7 assistance to children and families that are
8 unhoused, and, as Executive Director Ebanks
9 mentioned, we, for the first time thanks to you all
10 and to the city's investment, are going to be able to
11 offer childcare assistance to undocumented children.
12 I'll hand it over to my colleague at DOE to talk
13 about the work that they are doing under the
14 Blueprint.

16 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Thank you. I
17 think the primary goal of the Blueprint is to create
18 very necessary coordination amongst the agencies that
19 impact child-facing services, and I think it achieves
20 that in its planning stages and it will achieve that
21 as we build out the strategies.

22 Additionally, as it relates to the
23 Department of Education, we are first looking at
24 sustaining existing capacity with providers currently
25 offering childcare across the city. That will look

2 like creating a very dynamic enrollment strategy to
3 support an increase in enrollment and obviously the
4 drawdown of revenue sources to support their
5 businesses, the conversion of seats so that we can
6 provide slots to families as based on their needs,
7 their preferences in the areas that they prefer to
8 send their children, and as we collaborate across
9 agencies looking at adding capacity, whether it be
10 through a tax abatement, and working to develop an
11 RFP really steeped in the community needs as based on
12 the community assessment that we are working to
13 develop.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I'll just
15 add briefly that on the supply side, as Miss Hawkins
16 alluded to, there is a provision for a tax abatement
17 to retrofit spaces for childcare facilities and a tax
18 credit for employers that offer free or subsidized
19 care so all together that will create, we think,
20 access for an additional 17,000 children.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. It was
22 mentioned in the administration's testimony that the
23 city has been working with the state to improve the
24 provision of childcare because the city doesn't have
25 authority over the centers. I'm just interested in

2 the details, what that looks like, what are the ways
3 that the city works with the state to improve these
4 things? Can you describe the communications between
5 the city and state about the status of childcare
6 centers and safety for children at the start of the
7 pandemic?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Sure. Let
9 me take those things one at a time. There are a
10 number of things we've advocated to the state for
11 both legislative strategy and then executive actions
12 to improve childcare. We have worked with the Office
13 of Children and Family Services to reduce family fees
14 as much as legally possible which means that the
15 subsidy that we are providing to families has
16 increased. We have also worked with OCFS to advocate
17 for the higher reimbursement rate for providers. All
18 of those things are decisions that the city can't
19 make on their own and are bound by our oversight and
20 the state. We have also had a very successful
21 legislative session as you heard. In the budget, we
22 were able to pursue and see an increase in
23 eligibility from 200 percent of the federal poverty
24 level to 300 percent of the federal poverty level,
25 which is a significant advancement in being able to

2 serve more families that we know are still very low-
3 income, especially given the cost in the city. We
4 also have 2 bills that are pending signature from the
5 Governor that would make care easier and more
6 flexible for families, namely allowing families to
7 recertify their care every 24 months instead of every
8 12 months. We know that families that are forced to
9 recertify every year have to do a lot of paperwork,
10 which I think we all know introduces the opportunity
11 for it to be confusing or complicated and most of
12 those families remain eligible so this, if signed by
13 the Governor, would allow us to be able to keep
14 families having better continuity of care and not
15 having to go through that administrative burden. You
16 asked, I think second, about the relationship with
17 the state so, as I mentioned, we've done a good bit
18 of advocacy and conversation on the legislative front
19 and OCFS serves as our oversight so our conversations
20 about the childcare in New York City that is funded
21 by the State Block Grant are ongoing and continuous
22 on a weekly, monthly basis, we're having
23 conversations with them.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Great. What's the
25 current ability of 3-K programs in the city to

2 provide every 3-year-old with a seat in a 3-K
3 program?

4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: I'm so sorry to
5 make you say that one more time. I missed the
6 beginning of that.

7 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: What is the current
8 ability of 3-K programs in the city to provide every
9 3-year-old with a seat in a 3-K program?

10 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: The DOE is
11 incredibly committed to providing birth through 5
12 services for all families that require and expect a
13 seat. That includes our 3-year-olds. We're committed
14 to increasing the number of seats as per the prior
15 plan this year, in FY-23. I believe the original goal
16 was to increase it through FY-24 as well. We are
17 looking again at existing providers to see if we can
18 increase capacity there, looking to build capacity in
19 new spaces with new providers, just to keep forward
20 with that commitment to build new seats, again to
21 support a birth through 5 continuum but also those in
22 need of a 3-year-old seat.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: I apologize. I was
24 actually whispering to Committee Counsel that the
25 acoustics are tough in this room so I have a hard

2 time hearing your answers as well. I'm straining a
3 little bit. I hear what you're saying about having a
4 plan year over year for increases, but I just want to
5 push a little bit more to get some concrete
6 information. I don't know if I missed it at the top
7 of your answer, like where the current ability sits,
8 just to get a really accurate assessment of what the
9 perceived gap is.

10 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: We need to
11 really reassess what that gap is by conducting a
12 community assessment because we have to also
13 recognize that the needs change year over year based
14 on communities. However, currently we are primed to
15 support 38,000 3-year-olds in the current fiscal
16 year, and we're planning to increase to 51,000 slots
17 for the next fiscal year.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Okay. Thank you. I'd
19 love to follow up on the progress of sort of tracking
20 who we're missing and where those gaps are. I do want
21 to touch a little bit about affordability in a post-
22 Roe New York City given the U.S. Supreme Court's
23 decision in Dobbs v Jackson which came down last
24 Friday. It is now imperative to ensure that folks
25 have all of the necessary supports to maintain their

2 gains in education and economy with childcare being
3 one of the most critical needs so affordability
4 remains a major barriers, and the U.S. Department of
5 Health and Human Services recommends 7 percent of a
6 family's income as a benchmark for what is affordable
7 childcare. Do you collect data on what proportion of
8 families in New York City falls at or below that
9 benchmark, and, if so, how and at what intervals? If
10 not, why?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I can't
12 speak to whether or not the city collects data for
13 the entire childcare system which is to say the
14 childcare system that includes private pay. What I
15 can speak to is the share that families are required
16 to pay when they apply for subsidy. As I mentioned,
17 we've reduced the fee significantly and that 7
18 percent standard is often spoke about in the context
19 of childcare assistance and childcare vouchers. What
20 we've done is actually go much further. For families
21 whose income is 100 percent of the federal poverty
22 level or below, those families are paying the minimum
23 fee which is 1 dollar. For families that are between
24 100 percent and 200 percent of the federal poverty
25 level, and as of August it will be between 100

2 percent and 300 percent of the federal poverty level,
3 we have reduced their family share to only 1 percent
4 of their income above 100 percent of federal poverty
5 level.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I have
7 additional questions, but I want to make some space
8 for my Colleagues to ask as well so I'm going to hand
9 it over to Council Member Gutierrez.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Thank you,
11 Chair Caban. I do appreciate that you pronounced my
12 last name correctly. Thank you so much.

13 I have a couple of questions. The first
14 one being related to, considering the amount of folks
15 that will be working remotely, the need for childcare
16 is still very much relevant whether or not they're
17 working from home or away, what is the
18 administration's plan, obviously working jointly with
19 all of the agencies here, to really work on those
20 communities, whether it's building brick and mortar
21 or just opportunities for providers, what is the
22 administration's response to that uptick in remote
23 work and how that changes the access that families
24 are going to need for childcare?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I'll just
3 say that the requirements, which I think as we've
4 said are grounded in federal and state law and
5 regulations, are that to receive childcare assistance
6 the caregivers must be either working or in a
7 qualified activity. There is not a distinction
8 between remote work and otherwise so as long as a
9 family is able to document their work, they are
10 eligible for a subsidy.

11 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: I just wanted to
12 add as it relates to DOE seats, whether it be 3-K,
13 pre-K, or even Head Start, there are no barriers or
14 restrictions to enrolling a child for a family that's
15 working remotely.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: My question
17 was, and maybe these are more nuanced scenarios where
18 there are folks who enroll their child in a daycare
19 facility near where they work and are no longer doing
20 that and so sometimes there are situations in
21 communities where they're just not as accessible or
22 the option for childcare providers versus daycare
23 centers, so is there some scenario with the
24 administration where we're looking into that, where
25

2 you are looking into that and what is the solution in
3 that instance?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: The
5 continuum is really grounded in parent choice, and we
6 know that we have more work to do to make sure
7 there's adequate supply out there. A caregiver can
8 choose to transfer that enrollment of their child
9 including they can use their childcare voucher with a
10 family member, a close family friend in formal care,
11 if you will, like that so they have options anywhere
12 from those types of intimate relationships where they
13 would want the caregiver to be someone they know to
14 family-based care to a childcare center, either using
15 a voucher or through the DOE system.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Okay.
17 Fantastic. Are there certain communities where you
18 feel that there is, for lack of a better term, a
19 desert where, in certain parts of my district, for
20 example, I know that there are portions of the
21 southside where we have a decent amount of daycare
22 centers but I think other parts, Ridgewood for
23 example, do not have it so can you all share a sense
24 of what those neighborhoods look like and is there an
25

1 interest in kind of building these out more, like
2 actual centers and centers owned by the city?

3
4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Yes. First, I
5 would say OCFS, that my colleague referred to, has
6 really been a trailblazer in identifying childcare
7 deserts across the state, including the city, working
8 to release RFIs to support the buildout of new seats
9 in existing programs, seats in new buildings for that
10 very reason. I think one thing we want to acknowledge
11 is in addition to childcare deserts, again we have to
12 right-size and optimize placement based on family
13 need. There may be a lot of seats in one community,
14 but that is not the particular age group that the
15 family requires. We need to focus on infant/toddler
16 care in addition to building out 3-K and pre-K, a kid
17 is 2 before they are 3, and we need to create
18 capacity for those families in need as well so
19 absolutely looking at, again, converting seats where
20 possible, building capacity in places that already
21 have a permit or license maybe through DOHMH or OCFS,
22 and a variety of settings. Preference is not just
23 about location but also environment. Families may
24 want a center-based slot, others may want a home-
25 based slot so we have to acknowledge and recognize

2 the needs of the families and really build out from
3 there.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Thank you. My
5 last question, with 30 seconds, Chair. Given that
6 there are so many more New Yorkers, I would say
7 working in nontraditional jobs, so they're not
8 filling the 9 to 5 anymore, they're doing the
9 evening, the weekend hours, oftentimes more than one
10 job at the same time, what accommodations or what
11 considerations are being made for those dynamics when
12 it comes to providing childcare for these folks, and
13 this is an opportunity to educate me as well because
14 I would love to know.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I'll say
16 from the voucher side, families are able to enroll in
17 care for the hours that are aligned with the activity
18 of either work or school or training that they are
19 enrolled in so assistance is available. I think we
20 have more to do to look at whether or not there is
21 adequate childcare options available during irregular
22 hours, if you will, or nontraditional hours. Again,
23 we do know that that ability to choose between types
24 of environments is really important to families that
25 are working or in an activity during nontraditional

2 hours so that they can access either informal or
3 family-based care at hours that a center may not be
4 open.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Thank you.
6 Thank you, Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I'd like to
8 acknowledge that we have been joined by Council
9 Member Gennaro. Good to see you. I'll pass it over to
10 Council Member Menin.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much,
12 Chair. First of all, I want to thank the
13 administration for their testimony today. I am
14 thrilled to hear that the administration is in
15 support of my package of universal childcare bill and
16 shares a goal of finally getting New York City to
17 universal childcare. Just a few questions.

18 On Intro 485, your testimony indicated
19 that you believe that this would then codify
20 Childcare Connect. I just want to say I have real
21 concerns with Childcare Connect. We spent a ton of
22 time on this website. We've heard from advocates,
23 from constituents who are trying to find childcare in
24 their neighborhood, and, when they utilize the search
25 function, it doesn't oftentimes work so I would

2 respectfully ask that the administration go back and
3 review the functionality of that because we
4 absolutely have to improve that.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We'd be happy
6 to take a look and also to work with your office to
7 identify the specific issues. The point of Childcare
8 Connect is to make it usable for families and that's
9 our goal.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. Terrific. I
11 mentioned in my opening statement that over 1,100
12 childcare facilities have closed in recent years so
13 the intent of Intro 488 and 489 is to address that so
14 I'm delighted to see that you all are in support of
15 that.

16 Another issue that has been raised
17 repeatedly by advocates to my office is about
18 background checks. I know in the Mayor's Blueprint
19 for Childcare it was mentioned that you're going to
20 be addressing the issue of background checks. My
21 question is what is the average wait time currently
22 for a background check?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Let me say
24 first that we know how critically important it is for
25 families when they drop their child off at childcare

2 to know and be confident that the people caring for
3 their children have been fully cleared, and we also
4 know how important it is for childcare providers to
5 get good service and to get a timely response from
6 the Health Department. The turnaround times are too
7 long, longer than we want them to be. I don't have
8 the exact number with me today, but I will say, as
9 you saw in the Blueprint, we are thrilled that we
10 have been authorized to hire 40 staff and to build
11 some technology, and that's going to help us speed up
12 that process.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. Obviously, no
14 one is saying to abbreviate the process and create
15 any, I'm a parent, no one wants to create any kind of
16 danger of course, but we want to make sure that the
17 process is expedited. I have 2 childcare providers in
18 my neighborhood that are closing, they say, because
19 of this background check wait. They literally have
20 been waiting for so long that now they are forced to
21 close. Again, I just want to reiterate the importance
22 of creating some kind of effective but expeditious
23 process.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We agree.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. Great. Next
3 question. Can the administration share some of the
4 reasons of why so many childcare centers, we talked
5 about background checks, but there are other reasons
6 as to why they're closing. What additional steps can
7 be done to prevent that, and do you all have any
8 estimates about how many new centers might close in
9 the coming year?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I can't say
11 that I have, unless my colleagues do, any concrete
12 data about other reasons for closure, but I can tell
13 you what know and hear anecdotally which is that the
14 pandemic, as it was on many businesses, was very
15 difficult, that increasing costs and inadequate
16 reimbursement which is why we've focused on that puts
17 a strain on providers and their ability to have and
18 keep staff, and I think all of the struggles across
19 the workforce are certainly a part of that. Again, I
20 think we've been laser-focused on trying to figure
21 out ways to support providers including through the
22 pandemic. I don't have any approximation of providers
23 that are on the verge of closing, but what we have
24 done is work with and at the state level and at the
25 city level to do everything we can to stabilize

2 providers. Throughout the pandemic, we offered a
3 number of waivers including waivers to be able to pay
4 providers for when they had to close because there
5 was a COVID outbreak and have continuity of financial
6 support there and to be able to pay providers when
7 children were absent and we continue to do that. We
8 know that we've all changed the way we operate, and
9 it's great to be here in person today, but we're not
10 fully out of the woods on the pandemic. We also, as I
11 said, have advocated for and implemented this higher
12 reimbursement rate which we think is really critical
13 to being able to have providers have stability and
14 stay open and keep up with cost of care.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. Half of all
16 community districts are a childcare desert. I happen
17 to represent one, Roosevelt Island. What can be done
18 to address this? What is the administration's plan to
19 reduce this so that every single community and
20 neighborhood across the city of New York has
21 accessible, affordable childcare?

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: I think this
23 is exactly what the Blueprint is about, right. The
24 work that we describe in the Blueprint is
25 foundational towards universal access. I think key in

1 that in that is the consistent dialogue among
2 stakeholders, which will really be able to give us a
3 firsthand account of on-the-ground experience
4 regarding gaps and regarding successes. Also, we have
5 this focus on the 17 high-need communities so I think
6 we have the data and we know where we see the
7 greatest vulnerability at this point in time. I think
8 the other thing to remember that this is also very
9 fluid. If you look at the demographics and where kids
10 sprout up at what time and when, not things that we
11 can predict once we identify a pregnancy but I won't
12 go there because it gives me shudders based on the
13 SCOTUS decision, but I think what we're talking about
14 is the systemic, holistic approach built upon
15 community input, built upon collaboration among
16 providers, and then I think also what you're alluding
17 to is what I am going to refer to as pig-to-market,
18 how quickly do we identify the need and respond to it
19 so, overall, that's what we're trying to build, and
20 the Blueprint is foundational to that. We have in the
21 first I think 4 years 800 million investment which
22 will elevate total investment in childcare to 2
23 billion in New York City. We'll continue to study it
24 with the various operations, with the creation of the
25

2 Childcare Office that will report directly to Deputy
3 Mayor for Strategic Initiatives and the centralizing
4 of the operations as well.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Before I pass it
7 along, I just want to follow up and echo a concern
8 that I share with Council Member Menin because the
9 federal law currently requires that background checks
10 for childcare providers be processed within 45 days,
11 and I understand that DOHMH, which oversees the
12 checks, is not in compliance with that and that it's
13 in fact taking many months to process these checks.
14 Obviously, as we all are well-aware, we can't expand
15 care if there are no educators cleared to be in the
16 classrooms and so I really, really want to impress
17 the importance of knowing exactly what the
18 administration's plan is for significantly reducing
19 that length of time it's taking to process background
20 checks and then also being up to date on the progress
21 that's being made in executing that plan.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Our goal is
23 to meet that federal requirement, and, as we outlined
24 in the Blueprint, we've been authorized to hire 40
25 staff. We are looking for great people to join our

2 team at the Health Department. We'd love to have you
3 circulate our job postings and send great people our
4 way. We're also building technology so that we will
5 be able to automate some of the process, make sure
6 that applications that are submitted are complete and
7 without error. We'll continue to provide technical
8 assistance to providers to help them manage the
9 complex paperwork. Our goal is the same as yours, and
10 I'm very happy that we've now been authorized to
11 bring on that staff and to build an IT system and I
12 think that in the coming months we will start to see
13 those timelines reduced.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: What is the timeline
15 for bringing on those 40 staff members?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We've begun
17 the hiring process. We are all functioning in a
18 difficult labor market so I don't know, but we are
19 going to be working as quickly as we can. These are
20 high-priority hires and so I hope within the coming
21 months to have people on board fully. Obviously,
22 we're not going to wait to have all 40. We're going
23 to bring people on as we get good applicants. We're
24 hopeful that it will not be a drawn-out process. It
25 is a difficult labor market, so I would love

2 everyone's help sending talented people to the Health
3 Department website to take a look at our postings.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I will pass
5 it over to Council Member Riley.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Council
7 Member Caban. Thank you to the administration. We
8 really appreciate your presentation today. Hearing a
9 lot of great things from this Blueprint. As a parent,
10 childcare is very important to me as well. One thing
11 I realized recently is that there is a desert within
12 a lot of communities, and I'm just going to echo the
13 sentiments of Council Member Gutierrez and Council
14 Member Menin, but I did hear a lot about
15 collaboration, community input. Can you just walk us
16 through how do you plan on executing the community
17 assessment, how do you plan on getting community
18 input? A lot of the time it's not anyone's fault per
19 se, but usually when we hear about community
20 assessments they happen after and then when we're
21 going to our communities they never get any input in
22 these assessments so can you just walk us through how
23 you're doing the assessment?

24 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Absolutely. Some
25 of the logistics are still being developed, and the

2 goal is to really outsource the individual or the
3 actual facilitator of the assessment. We want it to
4 be as impartial as possible. The goal is really to
5 facilitate everything we outline in any future RFP to
6 guide seat placement. What we plan to do is
7 coordinate engagement with families and communities
8 to understand exactly that, their needs and their
9 wants. I always like to say childcare is chosen based
10 on proximity and price so understanding if that
11 proximity is to their workplace or to their home and
12 understanding that cost for a full-day seat, full day
13 as defined by their workday if they are a working
14 family, not by the school day, is also some
15 prioritizations that we want to include. Also
16 providers, we have to look at their ability, their
17 capacity to offer that care. To my colleagues' point,
18 it's not just about the demand but also the supply
19 and understanding what they need to operationalize
20 that care for families. We plan, again, to do that
21 prior to placing seats. We really want to steep all
22 of this in communities by communities, and we have to
23 engage with them. That's also at the crux of the
24 Blueprint. It talks about our collaboration, which is
25 huge. We need to talk to each other. We need to

2 streamline services and supports, create efficiencies
3 so we can work and support and centered around family
4 needs. Additionally, in the Blueprint, it does
5 outline metrics and indicators. We plan on tracking
6 our progress throughout. This is not saying we set a
7 goal and hopefully one day we'll attain it. We are
8 comprehensively and collaboratively going to work
9 together on our shared goals, on our individual goals
10 that are assigned to each agency to ensure that we
11 are creating milestones to achieve them, if we falter
12 in any way that we adjust accordingly, and we're
13 doing that, again, centered around families,
14 children, and provider voices and ensuring that we
15 adjust as necessary.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. If I
17 could just make a suggestion, please utilize our
18 offices because we're getting the complaints that we
19 didn't know about this assessment, these are our
20 families, and we want to make sure that we're
21 engaging our parents as much as possible in this
22 process so if you could just please engage the
23 Council Member's office so we could actually get it
24 to the right community groups within our community
25 that could actually execute this assessment.

2 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Invitation
3 received.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Another
5 thing, the purpose of this Blueprint is to reach the
6 possibility of universal childcare. Does the
7 administration have a projected year, date that we
8 could see that we will achieve this or we're just
9 trying to figure it out right now.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: I would say
11 not at this time, but certainly we'll figure out the
12 pace. I think there's so much to learn in the first 2
13 years, which is why we want a cautious and
14 intentional but still aggressive and ambitious start,
15 and lessons learned will be able to give us a better
16 sense of when, but the partnership is not just us,
17 let me say it this way, we need the partnership of
18 state and federal government to get there and so we
19 know it's not us alone. What we're trying to do here
20 is leverage the Mayor's influence certainly and work
21 with our system so that we are ready and we have
22 prepared our base to then showcase what we can do,
23 and I just want to underscore that we don't intend to
24 do this without partnership with the City Council

2 Members. You're really critical partners at the table
3 too.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. My last
5 question, facilities for families with children with
6 disabilities is a real challenge. Even public spaces
7 for children with disabilities, just having access to
8 resources, do you have a number or an estimate of how
9 many facilities within each Council District support
10 children with disabilities?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: We don't have
12 that number, but I certainly would say we are bound
13 by the federal ADA laws, but let's get to that
14 number. At the Commission on Gender Equity, we think
15 a lot about intersectionality, and disability or
16 physical and mental challenges are one of those
17 critical issues as well so we're going to get to the
18 number and get that back to you. In principle, we
19 need to be there, and we agree with you. Thanks for
20 raising that question.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Thank
22 you, Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I'll pass
24 it to Council Member Richardson Jordan.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Hi.

3 Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the testimony. I
4 wanted to ask a question, and it was touched on by
5 our Chair. I know you spoke already about the
6 incoming 40 staffers, but I wanted to ask
7 specifically about technical assistance for those who
8 are looking to become providers or those that need
9 help with filling out the applications for support so
10 what does that technical assistance look like
11 currently? Is it workshops or is there any one-on-one
12 support?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: You mean

14 technical assistance for people who want to become
15 childcare providers or for the background clearance?
16 We provide a huge amount of technical assistance. We
17 have a lot of written guidance materials, we provide
18 one-on-one consultations, we offer webinars, and I
19 want to just break down your question a little bit
20 because we do that specifically for the background
21 clearance paperwork. We've done a lot of that, and
22 we'll continue to do it. We also do that for
23 providers generally or providers-to-be to learn about
24 the things they need to do to become providers and

2 the paperwork that they need to complete. It's an
3 important question and thank you for raising that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay.
5 Awesome. It sounds like some really great stuff
6 happening there. Will that be the same for receiving
7 support when we're talking about this childcare fund
8 or we're talking about subsidy?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: There are a
10 couple of different ways that we need to support
11 providers. You've heard about how providers are
12 supported in the license and regulated space, but to
13 receive vouchers, that's another whole set of sign-up
14 and paperwork. Our office at ACS works closely with
15 providers that are interested in becoming providers
16 that accept subsidy childcare vouchers. We know that
17 as we expand, we really need to ramp up that work. We
18 are developing a strategy in partnership with CUNY'S
19 Professional Development Institute that does a lot of
20 professional development and support with providers
21 to also assist us in educating, training, and
22 providing technical assistance to providers so that
23 they are ready to go when a family comes to them with
24 a voucher.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay.

3 Awesome. I also had a question just from something

4 that was touched on earlier in the conversation

5 around the tax credit for employers who are providing

6 childcare services on their sites. Do we have a sense

7 of how much that will be in terms of the tax revenue

8 and how many kids it would cover? Do we have numbers

9 on that?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: We'll have

11 to check with our partners at City Hall and Deputy

12 Mayor Wright's office to see if we have that

13 information.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay.

15 Great. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I want to

17 ask a few more questions about the Blueprint. I'm

18 glad the administration is prioritizing lower cost

19 for families. A 1 percent copayment as laid out in

20 the Blueprint released yesterday is going to put

21 hundreds of dollars back in working families'

22 pockets. I am concerned, however, about the state

23 benefit cliff this creates for families with incomes

24 just over the 300 percent of poverty who are not

25 eligible for assistance. For instance, say I'm a mom

2 and a family of 3 and our income goes from 68,000 a
3 year to say 70,000 a year, according to the Blueprint
4 I would go from paying 680 dollars a year for care to
5 being entirely on the hook for tuition, facing cost
6 upwards of 10 to 20,000 a year, and we know from
7 years of research on the utilization of public
8 benefits the perverse impact this can have with
9 families turning down promotions so as not to lose
10 their benefits and so now parents are going to make
11 the best choices for themselves and their families
12 but what's the city's plan for addressing that cliff?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I will say
14 that today we are bound, because the vast majority of
15 our money is through federal and state dollars, we
16 are bound and constrained by the laws and regulations
17 and so we do need to think about and deal with those
18 families that just tip over because today we are not
19 able to offer a voucher or an Early Learn seat to a
20 family that is above that threshold based on our
21 statutory complaints.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: What does some of that
23 planning look like? Have y'all be talking about what
24 potential solutions could be to address that?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: We're in
3 constant conversation with our partners, with OMB and
4 thinking about what advocacy can look at, but we
5 don't have a strategy today. As I mentioned, we have
6 sort of erased the cliff at the 200 percent federal
7 poverty level in implementing the 300 percent, but,
8 of course, each time you push upstream you then have
9 another difficult threshold, especially again given
10 cost in New York City.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Is the administration
12 seriously considering filling that gap or addressing
13 that problem with city funding? Is the administration
14 seriously considering saying hey, we recognize that
15 this is a real problem and we can put city dollars
16 towards this? Can we get some statement of this is a
17 commitment in terms of it being a budgetary priority
18 to address or anything like that?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: It's
20 something that we need to discuss with our partners
21 and with OMB.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Okay. Again, my
23 personal position is that certainly it would be
24 worthy of us putting our city dollars there and maybe
25 taking them from some other places to make sure that

2 our families are provided with access to the
3 childcare that they need.

4 What's the administration's position on
5 work requirements for subsidized childcare, and would
6 the city be willing to supplement state and federal
7 funding to serve families who don't meet the current
8 strict work requirements?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: I just want to
10 share that one of the bills that's awaiting the
11 Governor's signature is de-linking childcare from the
12 hours a parent works and participates in qualifying
13 activities like training and school so we really are
14 interested in creating greater flexibility, and, in
15 so doing, we also recognize that there will be other
16 needs and other gaps that result and so this is a
17 process. We do not come to this with all the answers.
18 We probably have identified more problems and
19 challenges, but I want to talk about the spirit and
20 the intent behind the Blueprint as being solution-
21 oriented and being innovative and fostering
22 collaboration not just amongst agencies but across
23 sectors. We're leveraging philanthropic partners,
24 bringing to the table, Robinhood has already invested
25 a significant sum, 50 million I think, and combined

1 with the city, we're at 100 million, and so more of
2 that is likely to happen. The beauty of this work is
3 we will be intentional. Because we have a continuum,
4 because we have a multiplicity of voices at the
5 table, always looking for gaps and stakeholders and
6 issues, I think we have a better chance of steering
7 towards a seamless and integrated provision of
8 childcare services and arriving at universal
9 childcare.
10

11 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I just want
12 to say, again, I'm really proud of the fact that the
13 city stepped up and filled a very real gap when the
14 state did not provide, when the federal provisions do
15 not allow for certain funds to be used, for example,
16 for undocumented childcare and the state said we're
17 going to kick in 10 million dollars to make sure this
18 happens and so, again, I just want to put forth that
19 using our city dollars in that way just obviously
20 pays dividends when we talk about just the overall
21 health and safety of every single individual in our
22 city and so would love to see more of this is how
23 we're going to use our budget dollars because this is
24 where our priority is and really making sure that the
25 Blueprint is a funded mandate and that we're willing

2 to do whatever it takes to get those dollars there to
3 meet those benchmarks.

4 I want to ask a little bit about
5 supporting providers. I know that my Colleague
6 started asking a bit about this, but the Mayor's
7 Childcare and Early Childhood Education Blueprint
8 which obviously we've been talking a lot about it,
9 one of the things it mentions is the importance of
10 increasing business support to build the provider
11 capacity and ensure sustainability. Again, I know we
12 talked about some of the technical assistance and
13 workshops and things, but specifically New York City
14 is leaning more heavily on home-based childcare
15 providers than ever before. Home-based providers
16 offer the benefits of flexible hours, accessibility,
17 cultural compatibility with some of our youngest
18 children and their families. That's true. I
19 definitely applaud those efforts as we're trying to
20 address this crisis, but can you please describe what
21 the city is doing now to support daycare workers and
22 families who cannot afford care? It just seems like
23 many of the Mayor's proposals address the pipeline of
24 issue, but what's the administration doing to support

2 and serve childcare providers including those in
3 privately run centers now?

4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: I can't speak to
5 private run programs. I can only speak to those that
6 are affiliated with the DOE, particularly those in
7 contracted care as we do have district-run settings
8 that are in public schools and pre-K centers, but one
9 of the major areas that is included in the Blueprint
10 is workforce development for further
11 professionalizing the field, compensation equity. We
12 have to acknowledge that if we want to run childcare
13 and have particularly early childhood education we
14 have to build up and support early childhood
15 educators, and, in order to do that and considering
16 the diverse amount of settings that childcare is
17 provided in, creating more healthy competition that,
18 again, provides parent choice but doesn't create an
19 unhealthy competition that puts folks out of
20 business, and that's identifying, again, areas where
21 we can increase salaries, provide support so
22 families, those working as childcare educators, can
23 sustain their living as they support others to go to
24 work, attend school, and build up this economy. I do
25 think one of the things that you are identifying

2 here, Chair, is that this is just the beginning of
3 the conversation. This work is not happening at
4 anyone, it's happening with us, and I think these
5 types of conversations, this type of thought
6 partnership is necessary to further build out how we
7 plan to implement this plan.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I'd like to
9 ask a question about space assessment and reporting.
10 I know that the plan also mentions conducting the
11 citywide space assessment for childcare needs, but
12 the last time that the city did a similar assessment
13 and issued a report on childcare pursuant to Local
14 Law 183 of 2018 or as part of former Public Advocate
15 Letitia James' legislation to provide childcare for
16 city workers, the city essentially concluded that it
17 was already meeting mandates and need by providing
18 information and options related to the Early Learn
19 program and universal 3-K and pre-K, and so my
20 question is how will this assessment be different?

21 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: I'm going to ask
22 you to repeat that one more time. I'm so sorry.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Sure. Specifically
24 about the space assessment and reporting that's
25 included in the Blueprint plan. The last time the

2 city did a similar assessment of need and issued a
3 report on childcare and that was pursuant to Local
4 Law 183 of 2018 and also as part of former Public
5 Advocate Letitia James' legislation to provide
6 childcare for city workers, at the end of those, the
7 city essentially concluded that it was already
8 meeting mandates and need by providing information
9 and options related to Early Learn program and
10 universal 3-K and pre-K and so my question is how
11 will this assessment that's outlined in the Blueprint
12 be different?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: The assessment
14 done in 2018 was about the city's workforce and being
15 able to provide and typically I think the suggestion
16 was to look for city-owned buildings to be able to
17 retrofit in order to provide childcare services. The
18 cross-city group that got together recognized that
19 our workers can also access existing services because
20 of the expense associated with retrofitting space
21 that we couldn't necessarily guarantee would be
22 optimized in terms of utilization so that, for us,
23 became a huge concern so we would be creating space
24 and then the episodic use of it would create
25 financial burdens. That was the concern as worked

1 through this. The other factor was we recognized that
2 many of our workers were eligible for the services,
3 and the idea of some of them may want these services
4 closer to home than to work so there was a lot of
5 balance and nuance that went into that report. I
6 would say there's likely to be great difference. I
7 think the population we're talking about is beyond
8 the city's workforce. This is city's workforce plus
9 all New Yorkers with children who need services. I
10 also think we've just gone through a pandemic and are
11 still going through a pandemic as Elizabeth
12 underscores, that there are so many different effects
13 and layers that it's a very different time than 2018.
14 This is also a very different effort. The nature of
15 this effort is broader in scope than what was done in
16 2018. Clearly more ambitious. Clearly grounded in the
17 need of New Yorkers and our youngest New Yorkers. I
18 do think we expect different results, and that report
19 we did was really the voice of city workers. This
20 will be the voice of New Yorkers in communities,
21 high-need communities identified, so there's a real
22 discipline and intentionality put to this one that's
23 much broader in scope than the first one. However, we
24

2 certainly can learn from that first report and will
3 leverage it as appropriate.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I know
5 Council Member Gutierrez has some followups.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Thank you,
7 Chair. The following question might be something
8 that's very specific to my district. What I've found
9 is that a good amount of our daycare centers are in
10 my NYCHA developments and that what we have found,
11 specifically in Brooklyn, we are home of some of the
12 oldest NYCHA developments, they are on the pathway to
13 getting NORC designation so I'm specifically talking
14 about Cooper Park which is in the Williamsburg
15 portion of my district, Sheltering Arms was the
16 provider there, and the daycare center has remained
17 closed so in these instances where these daycare
18 centers, whether or not they're NYCHA or not, but
19 whether or not they're a NORC site for example, and
20 maybe there just isn't enough children. What happens
21 to this facility space? What is the administration
22 looking at with respect to the Blueprint but just
23 with respect to the fact that we are in dire need
24 overall as a city for universal childcare, what
25 happens to this facility space in this instance?

2 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: That's at the
3 core of the space assessment is looking at space that
4 is already being utilized, primed and ready,
5 retrofitted, outfitted to support childcare based on
6 the variety of childcare regulations that really
7 guide space requirements, some at the local level and
8 some at the state level, so looking at that to see if
9 the existing provider can expand within that space
10 for which ages, upward or down, because, again, and I
11 won't go into the details, there are restrictions
12 based on age and floors, but also looking at other
13 available community spaces, maybe NYCHA or other. I
14 think what you heard today is we're not restricting
15 those spaces to city-owned or city-leased spaces but
16 really encouraging private developers to consider
17 housing childcare in those facilities. Again, I would
18 say looking at NYCHA or any other community center
19 space run by the city or state is opportunity for us
20 to consider opening up childcare.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: I understand
22 that. My question is where there's an aging
23 population, how can we preserve these spaces for the
24 need of childcare? You know what I mean? Maybe I'm
25 not...

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: No, you're
3 clear, Council Member, and I think this is exactly
4 the nature of the issue because, if we're lucky we
5 age, if we're lucky we get older, and so what happens
6 is the young people move out and you tend to have a
7 naturally occurring retirement district, so older
8 people, and I think we have to look at that issue
9 because, again, because it's a NORC now means that
10 it's going to be a NORC in 5, 10 years so this is the
11 nimbleness and I think it's the opportunity we'll
12 have which we may have missed in earlier times in the
13 city to really understand how do we assure that
14 spaces don't go unused and respond to the needs of
15 the community as it currently exists but is also
16 prepared to address future needs, and we don't have
17 an answer now but that is a problem as you have
18 articulated and thank you for raising it because this
19 is something we're going to look at.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Yeah. It's real
21 so I appreciate that. My last 2 questions, one is if
22 you can just specify for me because I don't actually
23 know if you can talk to me a little bit about what
24 are the work requirements that childcare givers or
25 parents have to provide first, and then my second

1 question is through this Council budget there's a
2 sizable amount of money allocated for undocumented
3 families to receive access to childcare. Can you all
4 share what is the documentation that's being asked of
5 these families in order to enroll their children and
6 will a childcare provider taking in an undocumented
7 family feel a difference in the way that they have to
8 enroll that child? Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: The
11 requirements for state and federally funded care,
12 distinct from the city-funded program that we're
13 building for children that are undocumented, requires
14 that a caregiver or in a 2-caregiver household both
15 caregivers are working 10 hours per week or are in
16 qualified school or training, are unhoused, families
17 that are experiencing homelessness don't need to
18 prove those requirements, or are looking for work. We
19 are so grateful for the opportunity to be able to
20 serve children that are undocumented or have other
21 immigration status that does not qualify them for
22 state and federally funded subsidy. That said, we are
23 building this from scratch so we have not yet fully
24 defined what documentation will be required. Our goal
25 is that they can access the childcare marketplace

2 seamlessly as any other parent and caregiver would,
3 meaning that the voucher that they receive would not
4 be distinct but we are thinking very critically about
5 what it looks like for those families to come and
6 apply. We understand the vulnerability. We understand
7 how critical it is to make sure that immigration
8 status and information remains confidential, and
9 we're working closely with our city counterparts and
10 are having conversations with the Mayor's Office of
11 Immigrant Affairs to make sure that we build this in
12 a way that is safe for families and gives them the
13 seamless access that they need to childcare.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: I actually want to
15 follow up on those questions. I can't say this
16 enough, but I'm grateful to the administration and
17 really proud to have worked with my Colleagues and
18 especially Council Member Hanif and our Comptroller
19 to advance the campaign to extend that childcare to
20 undocumented children and certainly so glad to see
21 its inclusion, but, in addition to the questions that
22 were just asking about it, I also would like to know
23 a little bit about how you're planning to conduct
24 outreach to immigrant communities to ensure they're
25 aware of this new option and then, in addition to my

2 question and also to the questions that were just
3 posed, what are you hoping that the Council can do to
4 help with all of those efforts?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: The
6 outreach strategy is what we are building now. Again,
7 we are building this from the ground up so I can't
8 say that we are there today with knowing exactly what
9 this is going to look like, but we are moving as
10 quickly as we can to build that so that we can start
11 issuing vouchers and getting them in the hands of
12 families. I think it's really critically important
13 that we stay connected. You know the communities you
14 work in well, and we need to make sure that we are
15 having conversations and working in lockstep and,
16 again, doing this in a way where families understand
17 that this resource is available to them, feel safe
18 applying for this resource, and that we can as
19 quickly as possible make sure that we're connecting
20 them to care so I think the ask is just to keep the
21 conversation open.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Again, just knowing
23 throughout that process how we as the Council can
24 help execute that plan. Thank you.

1 I want to ask about interagency
2 collaboration and resources. I know that in 2018 CGE
3 launched the Gender Equity Interagency Partnership
4 that consists of senior level leaders throughout New
5 York City agencies. Has childcare been a topic of
6 consideration by the partnership or are there plans
7 for it to become one? I'm going to ask a couple more
8 questions related to this. I know that earlier this
9 year the city announced the creation of a new Mayoral
10 Office devoted broadly to equity, the Mayor's Office
11 for Gender Equity, MOE, what role will this new
12 office play in convening or working with the
13 partnership? Finally, to tie it all together,
14 according to press releases, the MOE utilizes an
15 intersectional approach to equity and includes the
16 CGE, the Racial Justice Commission, the Pay Equity
17 Cabinet, the Unity Project, the Young Men's
18 Initiative, and the Task Force on Racial Inclusion
19 and Equity, and together this body of offices and
20 commissions will engage New York's diverse
21 communities and constituencies to create
22 transformative change. Can you describe the
23 relationship between CGE and the head of MOE also?
24
25

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Let me start
3 with your last question first. The Mayor's Office of
4 Equity is the umbrella entity to which CGE now
5 reports and has other offices within it. CGE is the
6 Commission on Gender Equity. You just itemized the
7 others, Young Men's Initiative, the Racial Justice
8 Commission, it's an attempt for us to get the
9 continuum of equity and working collaboratively to
10 ensure that we address the multiple facets of equity
11 using an intersectional lens. Within that, we each,
12 if you will, we each have our primary
13 responsibilities based on Charter. Local Law 45 2020
14 give CGE its core responsibilities. We developed the
15 Gender Equity Interagency Partnership to foster
16 collaboration across agencies. There are 2 things we
17 look at when we do that. We want to be able to look
18 inward. How, as a city, are we developing gender
19 equitable policies and practices that affect our
20 workforce and advance the well-being of our
21 workforce. That's one part of the work. The other
22 part of the work is how do we serve New Yorkers in a
23 gender equitable way. Regrettably, we took a hard hit
24 in 2019 and during the pandemic with the work of this
25 partnership. The partnership, in fact, had developed

2 an action plan, and, when COVID happened, CGE lost
3 about 60 percent of its staff so we are now
4 thankfully at a stage where we're being restored and
5 expanded. We have a Deputy Executive Director for
6 Strategic Learning and Capacity Building whose
7 primary role is to manage that partnership across
8 city agencies. We're getting that unit staffed up and
9 so we'll be looking at what does the workforce need
10 in order to be equitable from an intersectional,
11 gender lens and how do we serve New Yorkers in a
12 gender equitable fashion so that's the vision. The
13 Mayor's Office of Equity sits above these 5 or 6
14 areas and creates synergy, and we want to be able to
15 tell that equity story in a seamless manner. There
16 will be broader initiatives that the Mayor's Office
17 of Equity will lead.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Has childcare been a
19 topic of consideration by the partnership to date or
20 are there plans for it to become one?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: I'm sorry.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Has childcare been a
23 topic of consideration by this partnership? I know
24 that some of the work was interrupted by the
25

2 continuing pandemic so, if it hasn't, are there some
3 concrete plans for it to become one?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: I would say
5 when CGE was a member of the group that worked on the
6 Childcare Task Force under former Public Advocate
7 Letitia James' legislation so we will continue to be
8 able to look at that issue. It will surface in many
9 ways. It is not an issue at this point in time, but I
10 should also say the Mayor's Office of Equity reports
11 to the Deputy Mayor of Strategic Initiatives which is
12 also housing the childcare work so you can see the
13 natural synergy is occurring here structurally, and
14 we're all partnering together and we're certainly
15 going to carry this. I want to also point out that
16 the Commission on Gender Equity in its economic
17 mobility and opportunity portfolio identified
18 caregiving as a major disruptor to economic mobility
19 for cis women and trans individuals so we see that as
20 a disruptor to wealth building and to asset building
21 and that has great implications for folks as they
22 age. That's one of priorities, that we really want to
23 look at how we ensure that caregiving does not
24 disrupt the earning potential and the wealth-building
25 opportunity given our capitalist society which can

2 lead to greater security in older age. That's one of
3 the priorities. We don't know yet how we're getting
4 at it.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: I want to shift a
6 little bit and ask you some budget-related questions.
7 Correct me if I'm wrong. I think a little bit earlier
8 in your testimony you mentioned the new childcare
9 office. Can you give me budget info and the
10 anticipated structure for that new office?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Can you repeat
12 the last part?

13 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: For this new childcare
14 office, can you provide budget information and the
15 anticipated structure of that office?

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: We do not have
17 that yet, but we can get that to you. I will say that
18 we anticipate the office will be launched at the end
19 of the calendar year so we can certainly get that to
20 you as we work towards that.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: To be fully
22 transparent, the basis of the question is wanting to
23 discern whether or not this new office is people just
24 wearing more hats or whether there's going to be
25

2 actual separate resources put into this office to
3 execute a particular...

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: I just want to
5 underscore the Mayor's commitment to get stuff done
6 so it's going to be about getting stuff done and not
7 more hats. We want to make sure we get the hats that
8 are necessary to get stuff done.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: I would appreciate
10 some concrete budget numbers and a mapping of what
11 the structure looks like when y'all have it.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Absolutely.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Does DOE have
14 estimates for how much it would cost to provide a
15 seat in a childcare program for every 3-year-old in
16 the city and then also every child aged 5 and under?

17 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: We're actually
18 reviewing those per-child costs now. I can get back
19 to you with the child-per-cost by age.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Great. Thank you.
21 What's the status of the one-year pilot program to
22 provide or subsidize a childcare center or centers
23 for children of city employees who are 4 years old or
24 younger and are not eligible for universal pre-K or
25

2 are 3-year-olds and younger but are not eligible for
3 3-K where 3-K services are available?

4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: I'm so sorry.
5 May you ask that one more time?

6 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Yes. What's the status
7 of the one-year pilot program to provide or subsidize
8 a childcare center or centers for children of city
9 employees who are 4 years old or younger and are not
10 eligible for universal pre-K or 3 years old or
11 younger but not eligible for 3-K where 3-K services
12 are available?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Can we get
14 back to you on that, Council Member?

15 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Sure.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Moving to Learning
18 Bridges, what's the current status of the Learning
19 Bridges program? Does it still exist in any capacity?
20 What's the total budget for learning bridges? Is the
21 DOE providing funding in DYCD's budget or any budget
22 for any other programs? If so, how much and from what
23 funding source are those funds coming through?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: I will have to
25 get back to you with those details.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Okay. Moving into
3 mental health needs. In what ways is the city
4 supporting the mental health needs of children who
5 have had to endure the pandemic? Do you provide
6 services through daycare programs and in what ways is
7 the city supporting the mental health needs of New
8 York City families whose children who choose to use
9 privately run or center-run daycare centers and
10 schools?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Council
12 Member, let me preface this by saying we as a city
13 understand the importance of being responsive to the
14 mental health challenges that certainly have arisen
15 through the pandemic and some which clearly predate
16 the pandemic. At this time, to respond to your
17 specific question, we don't have that information,
18 but we will be happy to get back to you with a
19 response.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. Have you
21 considered replicating existing childcare provision
22 systems with a track record of quality and positive
23 outcomes, particularly the U.S. Department of
24 Defense's military childcare programs? It's the
25 largest employer-sponsored childcare program in the

2 country and it's lauded for its consistent high
3 quality and so have you considered a small scale
4 replication pilot? What models or programs did the
5 city consider or evaluating creating its Blueprint?
6 One of the defining and positive features of the
7 Department of Defense's system is uniform, it's
8 consistently enforced quality standards that
9 contribute towards adjusting the racial and
10 socioeconomic disparities in quality of childcare.
11 Has a set of similar uniform standards been
12 contemplated at all and what would be the barriers to
13 designing, negotiating, and implementing one?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: In doing this
15 research and this work, clearly I think we learned
16 from what New York City has been doing, we learned
17 from what others have done (INAUDIBLE) and to shape
18 the work of the Blueprint. I can't state specifically
19 at this time what we used as our base or the
20 information that we gathered, but New York City,
21 itself, has an extensive record in trying to build
22 out care for 0 to 5-year-olds, recognizing the
23 tremendous uniqueness and wealth of our city and the
24 diversity of our population. I'm going to point to
25 the work that we're doing with undocumented New

2 Yorkers, children, not likely to be present in the
3 Department of Defense and their work with childcare
4 so I think we learn from where we think there's good
5 work and then we also recognize our uniqueness and
6 build a model based on those 2 pieces of information
7 at a minimum coming together, but I can get back to
8 you specifically on what successful models we looked
9 at in order to build out the work in the Blueprint.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: I would be deeply
11 interested in knowing what models were explored and
12 discussed and what the assessments were in terms
13 their applicability and relatability to our city and
14 our family's needs are.

15 I want to move into young folks with
16 developmental delays and disabilities. The Blueprint
17 mentions the importance of identifying children with
18 developmental delays or disabilities early in life,
19 but it doesn't include any plans to better serve
20 children with developmental delays or disabilities in
21 childcare and early childcare programs. The city has
22 a legal obligation to provide 0 to 5-year-old
23 children with disabilities with the special education
24 programs and services that they need, and the parents
25 of children with disabilities need to work just like

1 other parents. In a recent poll of New York City
2 parents of young children, 1 in 3 parents indicated
3 that their child had been turned away from a center
4 or home-based childcare program because the provider
5 could not offer enough support for a child with a
6 disability. Earlier this year, the DOE was projecting
7 a shortage for this spring of more than 900 seats in
8 legally mandated preschool special education
9 programs, programs that have smaller classes taught
10 by a special education teacher for preschoolers with
11 more significant disabilities with a disproportionate
12 shortage in the Bronx. As a result, hundreds of
13 children with autism and other complex disabilities
14 have been sitting at home without the instruction or
15 services they need or are entitled to. My questions
16 relating to that is do you know as of the last day of
17 school how many children were still waiting for a
18 seat in a legally mandated preschool special
19 education class and then also in recent years the
20 city has chosen to open tens of thousands of seats in
21 3-K and pre-K general education programs, and the new
22 Blueprint states that over the next 2 years the city
23 will increase access to childcare for more than, you
24 mentioned this, the more than 41,000 children.
25

2 However, it doesn't say anything about addressing the
3 shortage of preschool special education classes. Why
4 is the city able to open tens of thousands of general
5 education seats but unable to end the shortage of
6 legally mandated preschool special education classes
7 for children with more significant needs and will the
8 city commit to ending the shortage of preschool
9 special education classes and ensuring that there's a
10 seat for every child whose IEP mandates a special
11 education class for the upcoming school year?

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Thank you so
13 much for that question, Council Member. I think
14 you're identifying an issue that we have touched upon
15 but have not provided sufficient detail. I do want to
16 say that we were prepared to speak to you about the
17 pieces of legislation right now and so what we'd like
18 to do is come back to you regarding this specific
19 question. It is a critically important issue. We want
20 to make sure that all our children are served in New
21 York City and so, if you'd just give us the
22 opportunity, we will return with a response regarding
23 students with developmental delays and other
24 disabilities.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I think we
3 will follow up in writing on a couple more questions
4 related to that.

5 Particularly in relation to Intro 477,
6 does the administration foresee any issue with the
7 appointment process in forming the task force or
8 meeting of any of the deadlines required by the bill
9 as drafted? That's the Establishing the Childcare
10 Task Force.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: What we want
12 to offer there is to enter into discussion with you
13 regarding the relationship of the 2 task forces that
14 477 and 486 recommend and so we really want to assess
15 whether the advisory board that will be created
16 through the Blueprint is in some way related to the
17 purpose and goals of the 2 proposed task forces. We
18 certainly see the value add, the importance of
19 streamlining these actions so that we are not
20 becoming over-laden with task forces and can really
21 be focused on accomplishing the work. We're simply
22 saying we'd love to talk with you more about this.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Council Member Menin.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Great. Thank you so
25 much. Just to clarify, my bill is for an advisory

2 board so not a task force. There is another bill for
3 a task force, but I just want to distinguish it
4 because the purpose of the advisory board is really
5 to create an entity that has both the responsibility,
6 the duty, the power to legally create policy,
7 recommendations, initiatives. It would have
8 appointees designated by the Mayor, the Speaker, the
9 Comptroller, the Public Advocate so it is an actual
10 board, an actual entity so I just want to make sure
11 that that is clear.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Thank you. I
13 appreciate the clarification.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. There
15 are no further questions for the administration.
16 Thank you so much for your time.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EBANKS: Thank you so
18 much. It's been a pleasure. Thank you. We look
19 forward to continuing dialogue.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you so much.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: At this time, we
22 will move to public testimony and that portion of the
23 hearing. We do have one person here for in-person
24 testimony. That person is Eliana Godoy from Literacy
25 Inc. Apologies for any mispronunciation. We'll just

2 take 2 minutes. If that witness can approach the
3 table, we'll take several minutes and then we'll move
4 to public testimony. Thank you.

5 Thank you so much for joining us today.
6 We are using a 2-minute clock. For those in the room,
7 there's a clock on the wall, and you may begin your
8 testimony when the Sergeant calls the clock. We'll
9 just begin in one moment. We'll do an in-person panel
10 and then we'll go to a remote panel on the
11 television.

12 You may begin your testimony when the
13 Sergeant calls the clock. Thank you.

14 ELIANA GODOY: Great. I thank you, Council
15 Member Caban, for Chairing this hearing. I thank the
16 Members of the Committee and the Members who have put
17 forth legislation. We at Literacy INC commend the
18 Council for tackling the challenges of childcare from
19 many different directions. This is a multifaceted
20 problem. Please consider one more dimension, early
21 literacy training for licensed family daycare
22 providers. My name is Eliana Godoy, Deputy Director
23 of Literacy Inc, LINC, an acronym that also describes
24 what we do. We link families with young children to
25 literacy resources in their own community. We also

1 facilitate the Council's only early literacy
2 initiative, City's First Readers. New York City is
3 missing a golden opportunity by not including early
4 literacy training as part of the licensing process
5 for family daycare providers. We leave a vacuum where
6 we could in fact have deep impact. Licensed family
7 daycare providers are required to take training that,
8 quite rightly, emphasizes the safety and well-being
9 of children in their care, but, unlike their
10 counterparts at Head Start or ACS Daycare Centers,
11 they're not trained in early literacy. Childcare
12 offered in a provider's own home is the most common
13 childcare arrangement for young children from low-
14 income families. 90 percent of the brain development
15 takes place during their first 5 years of life, but
16 children in family daycare settings may not receive
17 the same stimulation as children whose caregivers are
18 trained in early literacy and education. We must
19 seize this moment with its focus on early childhood
20 to provide quality programs to all children. It is
21 not an expensive proposition to help license family
22 daycare providers turn their small business settings
23 into a word-rich environment, provide the training
24 (INAUDIBLE) of low-tech materials to label household
25

2 items in multiple languages. I ran out of time.

3 Essentially, the most important part is that 90
4 percent of the brain development happens from 0 to 5.
5 This is a critical opportunity, and, if we're talking
6 about equity in education, it starts in the first 5
7 years. We have a really good opportunity to not just
8 present access and affordability but to look at
9 quality as part of the important factors that make
10 sure that our kids are starting successfully so we
11 have a golden opportunity, and, at Literacy INC, we
12 would love to provide any assistance that we can in
13 providing training or access to literacy resources to
14 home daycare providers who are licensed in New York
15 City. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you very much.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. We
18 will now read the members of the next panel. This
19 panel is remote. We'll read all the names, and,
20 Council Member, if they have questions, will ask at
21 the end of the panel. The members of panel 2 will be
22 Lisa Zucker from the New York Civil Liberties Union,
23 Chris Bennett from Wonderschool, and Steven Morales
24 from All Our Kin. Just wait one moment, please, Miss
25 Zucker, and we will begin.

2 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Apologies. You
4 may begin when the Sergeant calls the clock.

5 LISA ZUCKER: Okay. Thank you.

6 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

7 LISA ZUCKER: Thank you. Good afternoon.

8 My name is Lisa Zucker, and my pronouns are she/her.
9 I'm a Senior Attorney for Legislative Affairs at the
10 New York Civil Liberties Union. Thank you for
11 allowing us to testify today.

12 To the extent that the Council's proposed
13 bills address the need for a coordinated and high-
14 quality childcare system, NYCLU is in support. As the
15 City Council acts on this package, however, it must
16 ensure that any new system is truly accessible for
17 all New Yorkers and does not unintentionally harm the
18 very families it aims to serve. To the latter point,
19 notwithstanding all the good people who work at the
20 Administration for Children Services, NYCLU is
21 strongly opposed to an administrative structure with
22 ACS at the head, and our testimony today will be
23 limited to that sole issue.

24 NYCLU has long viewed state intervention
25 in the family as a civil liberties issue and has been

involved in matter relating to the Child Welfare System for nearly 50 years. In the '70s, we brought litigation against the city that led to a settlement spurring significant changes to the foster system. We also appeared as amicus in the landmark case *Nicholson v Scopetta* defending the parental rights of mothers who are domestic violence survivors. ACS' primary role as the administrator of Child Protective Services make it ill-suited to serve as the agency charged with the implementation and oversight of childcare. More than 70,000 New York City children are investigated by ACS in a typical year. For many families, those investigations are as traumatic as a visit from the police. ACS has the power to conduct intrusive searches, conduct extensive questioning where everything a parent says can be used against them in court and, in the most dire cases, can separate youth from their parents without judicial approval. A disparate racial impact of the system are such that 90 percent of the children named in investigations, placed in foster care, and with open cases are black or Latinx. Poverty also drives a family's involvement with ACS. The vast majority of family separations...

2 SERGEANT BIONDO: Time expired.

3 LISA ZUCKER: Oops. Sorry. I will finish
4 up.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Please finish. That's
6 okay.

7 LISA ZUCKER: Poverty is one of the main
8 reasons for contact with the family regulation
9 system, not from abuse but from alleged neglect which
10 ironically can include things like lack of childcare.
11 Families living below the poverty line are 22 times
12 more likely to be involved in family regulation.
13 Because of these devastating consequences, it is not
14 surprising that families will view ACS as a threat
15 rather than an agency to turn to for support. Even
16 the ACS Commissioner, Jess Dannhauser, acknowledged
17 this in 2021 when he said families experience the
18 support as surveillance and no matter our intention
19 the experience is what matters. Instead of
20 administering childcare through ACS, NYCLU urges the
21 City Council to create as we have heard an Office of
22 Early Care and Education that is separate and
23 independent from ACS. Childcare is a public
24 responsibility that must be accessible to all, does
25 not result in trauma that has been documented by the

2 family involvement with ACS. Now is the time for New
3 York City to act, and New York City is perfectly
4 situated to take that action in a big and bold way.
5 Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you so
8 much. The next witness will be Chris Bennett from
9 Wonderschool. You may begin when the Sergeant calls
10 the clock.

11 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

12 CHRIS BENNETT: Hello, Committee Chair
13 Caban, Council Member Mein, and the Members of City
14 Council. My name is Chris Bennett, and I am the
15 founder and CEO of Wonderschool, a childcare
16 technology and services company that helps stabilize
17 the childcare industry by providing business
18 management and enrollment demand tools to childcare
19 providers, specifically home-based childcare
20 providers, and by creating recruiting, licensing, and
21 supporting brand new childcare programs. As a
22 technology company, we have seen the tremendous
23 impact technology and data tools can have on
24 supporting providers, connecting families and
25 programs, and helping state and local agencies make

2 informed decisions about where to allocate support
3 and resources. We support the childcare bill package
4 the City Council has put forth. Based on our work and
5 experience, there are 2 specific bills we would like
6 to highlight as critical methods for improving
7 childcare options for families and providers in New
8 York City.

9 First, Intro 485 proposed the creation of
10 an electronic childcare directory. Providing
11 information to families about open programs is a
12 critical way for childcare providers to fill their
13 programs. Today's parents are technology natives who
14 have grown up searching for information on their own,
15 but most data-based tools are challenging to
16 navigate. A single electronic directory would make it
17 easier for families to find childcare that meets
18 their needs. Childcare providers often struggle to
19 market their programs, which means they cannot always
20 fill their programs. Full program enrollment is one
21 of the key drivers of childcare income and
22 profitability, and making childcare information
23 easily available to families helps keep programs full
24 and ensures the childcare landscape is sustainable
25 for years to come.

2 Finally, Intro 487 proposes that the city
3 create an online portal for subsidy program
4 information. For many families, subsidized childcare
5 is the only way to afford care and find employment,
6 but it can be confusing for families to navigate this
7 process and understand the programs they may qualify
8 for. Digitizing the process...

9 SERGEANT BIONDO: Time expired.

10 CHRIS BENNETT: Saves time for a family..

11 I'm sorry?

12 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: You can wrap up your
13 statement.

14 CHRIS BENNETT: Digitizing this process
15 saves time for families and the agencies who review
16 their applications, makes the information more
17 accessible, and provides more options for support
18 like translation services to support families. An
19 electronic subsidy portal will help more families
20 benefit from these programs while providing backend
21 data to the city in hopes of reaching as many
22 families and providers as possible.

23 In closing, I would like to reiterate our
24 support for this childcare legislation and look
25 forward to seeing the impact the Council will have on

2 childcare in New York City in the coming year. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABAN:

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
6 your testimony. We will now move to the next witness
7 on this panel. Mr. Steven Morales from All Our Kin,
8 you may begin when the Sergeant calls the clock.

9 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

10 STEVEN MORALES: Good afternoon. My name
11 is Steven Morales. I'm the New York Policy Director
12 at All Our Kin. All Our Kin is a nonprofit
13 organization that supports hundreds of family
14 childcare educators across New York City with
15 relationship-based licensing, business, and
16 educational quality coaching. Thank you, Chair Caban
17 and Members of this Committee, for recognizing and
18 taking on the childcare crisis facing families and
19 educators in our city. I want to share some brief
20 suggestions grounded in 3 key principles. A
21 comprehensive approach to care for children from
22 birth to 5, reducing fragmentation in our childcare
23 system, and placing equity and the voices of families
24 and educators at the center of city policy making.
25 This is particularly important for the city's 6,000

2 home-based family childcare programs whose expertise
3 has frequently been overlooked. We recommend
4 consolidating the childcare task force and advisory
5 board into one and explicitly including family
6 childcare providers and the parents they serve. This
7 will ensure that the Committee's work reflects the
8 wide range of high-quality childcare options in our
9 city. We support the Council making it easier for
10 families to access information about childcare
11 options. To streamline, we recommend that the subsidy
12 portal and directory be consolidated into one
13 platform and coordinated across the multiple agencies
14 that fund childcare in our city and our state. This
15 will give families a true one-stop shop. Legislation
16 should also make the portal available in family's
17 home language, ensure phone or in-person consultation
18 remains available for families who prefer it, and
19 include parents and providers in the design process.

20 Finally, we're excited by the Council's
21 proposed childcare program fund, and we recommend
22 further clarifying the fund's goal. To support the
23 workforce, the Council should provide a wage
24 supplement for employees and family childcare
25 providers. To prevent program closures, the Council

2 should increase funding and develop an equitable
3 formula that makes targeted grants available before
4 closure becomes a significant risk.

5 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
6 today. All Our Kin is here as a partner and
7 collaborator as we continue to recognize and support
8 home-based family childcare...

9 SERGEANT BIONDO: Time expired.

10 STEVEN MORALES: In our city. Thank you
11 very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I'd just
13 like to say thank you to Miss Zucker at NYCLU. I take
14 your concerns very seriously. As a former public
15 defender, I'm absolutely intimately aware of many
16 families' relationship to and interactions with ACS
17 and so that is a very critical and valid concern and
18 would love to stay in conversation about that. Thank
19 you to Mr. Bennett for your testimony, and, Mr.
20 Morales, thank you for all of your suggestions as
21 well. I appreciate y'all coming out to testify.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: This concludes
23 panel 2. We'll now move to panel 3. I'll be reading
24 the names of the 3 members on the panel starting with
25 the first. Elvin Sahin, again apologies for any

2 mispronunciations, Ericka Brewington (phonetic), and
3 Julian Kline. Please also note that written testimony
4 can be submitted up to 72 hours after the hearing,
5 and we will be checking for anyone that we
6 inadvertently missed or who has logged off and logs
7 back in after our 4th and final panel. This is panel
8 3. The first panelist is Elvan Sahin, and you may
9 begin your testimony when the Sergeant calls the
10 clock.

11 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

12 ELVAN SAHIN: Good afternoon. Thank you,
13 Chair Caban and Members of the New York City Council
14 Committee on Women and Gender Equity, for the
15 opportunity to testify today.

16 My name is Elvan Sahin, my pronouns are
17 she/her, and I'm a Policy Analyst on Early Childhood
18 Education at United Neighborhood Houses. UNH is a
19 policy and social change organization that has 45
20 settlement houses in its network, 40 of them in New
21 York City. (INAUDIBLE) settlement houses in New York
22 City are (INAUDIBLE) DOE contracted childcare
23 programs. Our testimony today calls on the City
24 Council to pass the package of childcare bills that
25 are presented in this hearing and continue to build

2 on stabilizing and expanding New York City's
3 (INAUDIBLE) early education system. I will also be
4 submitting a more detailed written testimony later
5 for the record.

6 We thank Council Members Menin, Hudson,
7 Gutierrez, and Caban for sponsoring these bills and
8 also the cosponsors for the bills. The proposed bills
9 that are under consideration today will bring more
10 accountability, transparency, and clarity to the
11 field of early childhood education, on path to
12 achieving universality. We also urge the Committee to
13 consider (INAUDIBLE) feedback that we believe
14 (INAUDIBLE) supermajority of the bills. We suggest
15 coordination with all city agencies that have a stake
16 in the childcare system like ACS, DOHMH, DOE as well
17 as the city and seek feedback from appropriate staff
18 in order to avoid duplicative actions that have the
19 same purposes. Similarly, we also suggest taking into
20 account the state and what the state has for these
21 purposes in terms of tools and resources that might
22 serve similar purposes.

23 We'd also like to emphasize avoiding
24 putting undue burden on existing providers in order
25 to implement these bills.

2 SERGEANT BIONDO: Time expired.

3 ELVAN SAHIN: Our written testimony also
4 will include more specific feedback in each bill. We
5 also would like to continue stabilizing the system by
6 prioritizing salary parity for early childhood
7 education staff. Thank you very much.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: All right. We'll
10 now move to the final panelist on this panel. There's
11 a small change due to individuals logged in so we'll
12 move to Julian Kline. You may begin your testimony
13 when the Sergeant calls the clock. Thank you.

14 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

15 JULIAN KLINE: Hi. Good afternoon, Chair
16 Caban and Members of the New York City Council. I'm
17 Julian Kline, Head of Policy for Tech NYC. Tech NYC
18 is a nonprofit member-based organization representing
19 over 800 technology companies in New York. We are
20 testifying in support of the Council's package of
21 bills supporting expansion and increased access to
22 childcare and offer the following recommendations to
23 ensure the successful implementation of these
24 critical proposals.

New York City's tech ecosystem has over 25,000 companies and startups. As it continues to grow affordable and accessible, childcare becomes more integral to the success of the industry. For many of the 372,000 tech employees, childcare is a cornerstone of their company benefit packages. They are integral to attracting and retaining talent as well as fostering sustainable and flexible work environment for working families. Tech NYC supports Intro 477 which would establish a childcare task force. We encourage the Council and any task force created to take a close look at the costs behind childcare centers. Earlier this year, care.com found that 51 percent of families spend at least 20 percent of their income on childcare. Therefore, reducing childcare costs would relieve many New Yorkers of a tremendous burden. Child caregivers and employees should be properly compensated so this is one cost which cannot be reduced. However, we encourage the City Council and any established task force to look creatively into the expenses and costs of childcare and identify areas where savings can be made without reducing the quality or safety of the care. One potential cost-saving measure would be eliminating

2 the requirement for childcare centers to be located
3 on the first floor of buildings. Second floor
4 commercial spaces are often lower priced than ground
5 floor spaces. Additionally, they are usually in less
6 demand than higher floor commercial spaces. With the
7 proper safety precautions, the safety and egress for
8 infants and toddlers can still be protected while
9 providing additional real estate options for
10 providers. Tech NYC recommends that the City Council
11 assess the viability and safety of locating childcare
12 centers on the second floor of buildings, which...

13 SERGEANT BIONDO: Time expired.

14 JULIAN KLINE: Could lead to more
15 affordable childcare.

16 Second, there are numerous existing
17 childcare providers and employer tax credits that go
18 unused. This includes the federal tax credit for
19 employer-based childcare of up to 35 percent of
20 expenditures with a 200 percent match from the state.
21 There's also New York Excelsior Job Creation Tax
22 Credit for new childcare centers and a personal
23 income tax credit for working parents and those with
24 disabilities. The City Council should explore more

2 educational and public awareness efforts that will
3 increase usage of these credits.

4 Tech NYC also supports the goals of Intro
5 485 and 487 and Mayor Adams by creating online
6 portals and platforms to make it easier for parents
7 to enroll their children in childcare programs. The
8 New York State Office of Children and Family Services
9 and the New York City Department of Health's
10 Childcare Connect websites have several childcare
11 listings. However, they are not always easy to use or
12 access on personal mobile devices. New York City's
13 tech community would be happy to assist with
14 identifying digital solutions that will make the city
15 and state's childcare platforms easier to use. Tech
16 NYC recommends creating public and private
17 partnerships with our local tech community to revamp
18 some of the government's public-facing resources.

19 Lastly, we support Intro 488, protecting
20 childcare providers in danger of being priced out of
21 their locations. We recommend that this bill
22 specifically delineates who is eligible for these
23 grants so the intended childcare facilities in
24 economic straits receive the financial support they
25 need. Additionally, we recommend that the Council

2 make use of public data available including from the
3 most recent census so that neighborhoods that have
4 seen increases in family and child populations
5 receive the proper consideration during the funding
6 allocation process.

7 Thank you for addressing these important
8 issues, and we are excited to be working with the New
9 York City Council to help make childcare more
10 affordable and accessible for years to come.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you both for
12 your testimony.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: This concludes
14 this panel. We will now move to panel 4, which is the
15 final panel. We have 2 witnesses and then we read the
16 names of those who registered and are not present on
17 Zoom. If we have inadvertently missed anyone, we'll
18 also check for additional testimony.

19 The 2 witnesses on panel 4 will be
20 Katrice Thomas and Latisha McNeill. Katrice Thomas,
21 you may begin your testimony when the Sergeant calls
22 the clock.

23 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

24

25

2 KATRICE THOMAS: Good afternoon

3 (INAUDIBLE) Thank you for allowing me to testify
4 today.

5 Women, in particular black women and
6 brown women, are most impacted by economic crises. As
7 you know, women account for up to 54 percent
8 (INAUDIBLE) forces...

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Miss Thomas, I'm
10 sorry. I'm so sorry to interrupt. We're having
11 technical issues. We can't hear you very well. If
12 it's possible to start again.

13 KATRICE THOMAS: Sure. One moment. Is this
14 is any better?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Yes, we can hear
16 you clearly now. Thank you.

17 KATRICE THOMAS: Sorry about that. I began
18 by speaking about women, in particular black and
19 brown women, being the most impacted by economic
20 crises. As we all know, women account for up to 54
21 percent of coronavirus-related job losses and some
22 months of 2020 black and brown women accounted for
23 all net job losses. NEW offers a holistic career-
24 oriented solution. NEW prepares, trains, and places
25 low-income women in careers in the skilled

1 construction, utility, and maintenance trades,
2 helping women achieve economic independence and a
3 secure future for themselves and their families. At
4 the same time, NEW provides a pipeline of qualified
5 workers to the unionized industries of New York City.
6 Union representation brings wage settings into the
7 open and helps ensure that employers set wages based
8 on objective criteria such as skill, effort, and
9 responsibility. Unionized women make on average 23
10 percent more than women without a union. They are
11 also far more likely to have paid and stronger
12 protections against discrimination and sexual
13 harassment in the workplace. These careers offer
14 financial security with wages starting out at 19
15 dollars per hour leading towards a pathway to middle-
16 class wages and benefits through their union. To
17 enter a lucrative and sustainable field like
18 construction, women must have access to resources
19 that address their specific needs in the industry.
20 Since 1978, NEW has been a ground-breaking model that
21 works for women in New York City. Through our
22 programs, we offer students no-cost comprehensive
23 training in both the hard and soft skills needed to
24 thrive in a trade career including advanced training
25

2 programs and expanded employer-based wrap around and
3 social services including nontraditional childcare
4 pilot programs in partnership with the North American
5 Building Trade Unions and a growing number of
6 opportunities available to women through those
7 employers. 30 percent of NEW graduates are single
8 parents and heads-of-household in which access to
9 childcare assistance is a challenge. Additionally, 20
10 percent of graduates, some 40 people, that are
11 seeking initial...

12 SERGEANT BIONDO: Time expired.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: You can finish. Go
14 ahead.

15 KATRICE THOMAS: Thank you. Name childcare
16 and education as the top of their list regarding
17 barriers to employment and entrance into the union.
18 We envision a future where women are equally provided
19 with skills (INAUDIBLE) opportunities needed to
20 succeed in construction trade careers. NEW believes
21 that equitable economic opportunity for tradeswomen
22 means increasing union construction projects in New
23 York City as well as creating sustainable and
24 sufficient long-term construction by advocating for
25 diversity goals on projects. More than 82 percent of

2 individuals accessing NEW (INAUDIBLE) services
3 identify as minority. Additionally, 80 percent of
4 women are underemployed, working minimum wage jobs
5 with 75 percent receiving some form of (INAUDIBLE)
6 public assistance. Thank you so much.

7 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you so
9 much. We're also going to be adding 2 individuals to
10 this panel. Again, this is our final panel. This was
11 Katrice Thomas. The next witnesses will be Latisha
12 McNeill, Gregory Brender, and then Sage Schaftel,
13 apologies in advance for any mispronunciations.
14 Again, the next witness will be Latisha McNeill, and
15 you may begin your testimony when the Sergeant calls
16 the clock. Thank you.

17 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

18 LATISHA MCNEILL: Hi. Good afternoon.

19 Thank you, everyone, especially thank you to Julie
20 Menin, my Council Member. I am a tenant of the Holmes
21 Towers on the Upper East Side on 92nd Street, which
22 is a low-income development within NYCHA. I'm here to
23 testify on an experience that I had within the last
24 week which is why this panel is so important. I've
25 been searching for universal childcare, affordable

2 childcare for my youngest child for the last couple
3 of years. Sunshine Daycare recently opened up. I went
4 for a tour hoping for finding some success, and their
5 rate per month was 3,333 dollars. That's more than my
6 rent. That's more than transportation. That's more
7 than I'm making with my salary as a part-time worker.
8 Organizations like this coming in our community not
9 really servicing us or giving us the opportunity to
10 put our children in safe spaces and ultimately having
11 us resort to unsafe spaces to where we are at work
12 trying to make an income but also still worrying if
13 our children are okay because we can only afford the
14 bare minimum of childcare. Implementing these laws
15 and getting the childcare universal and getting it to
16 where it needs to be so everyone can benefit from
17 having adequate childcare would be amazing and great.
18 Yeah, I'm ready for it to get started for the parents
19 who are coming in behind me because it's really
20 desperately needed, especially in the lower-income
21 areas where we're kind of forgotten about. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
24 your testimony. The next witness will be Gregory
25 Brender.

2 Just 2 notes, again, you can submit
3 written testimony up to 72 hours after the hearing to
4 testimony@council.nyc.gov, and Council Members will
5 also have questions at the end of the panel, they're
6 4 witnesses. We're moving to our third witness,
7 Gregory Brender. Thank you.

8 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

9 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you so much for
10 the opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory
11 Brender, and I'm here on behalf of the Daycare
12 Council of New York. We are a membership organization
13 of early childhood education provider organizations
14 throughout New York City. We're really glad that this
15 hearing is happening and particularly that it's being
16 held by the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. We
17 recognize that early childhood education is an equity
18 issue for women and for everyone and also that our
19 workforce, who are primarily women and women of
20 color, are underpaid and underappreciated because of
21 longstanding discrimination against work that is
22 performed primarily by women and so we hope to see
23 real progress on achieving salary parity for the
24 early childhood workforce. We're going to submit
25 written testimony with individual comments on each of

2 the pieces of legislation and resolutions in
3 consideration today. We do support them but 2 common
4 themes. One is in task forces and advisory councils
5 ensuring the inclusion of the diversity of the early
6 childhood field and also that we are providers of
7 research and referral for parents looking for
8 childcare and so working with resource providers on
9 things like having directories and online portals to
10 ensure that the individual needs of families are met
11 is crucially important.

12 With regards to the general topic of the
13 hearing, we're really excited to see the movement
14 towards universal childcare in New York City. We know
15 that New York needs to expand its childcare system.
16 To do so, we really need to strengthen and stabilize
17 the network of providers that are currently providing
18 education and are often struggling to keep the doors
19 open. Three key recommendations in this regard.

20 1 - To ensure salary parity for the early
21 childhood workforce, not just teachers but also
22 directors and support staff and they should ensure
23 that all of them have longevity increases like their
24 counterparts in the public schools.

25 SERGEANT BIONDO: Time expired.

2 GREGORY BRENDER: I'll be very quick. The
3 other 2 recommendations around enrollment, allowing
4 community-based enrollment and suspending the pay for
5 enrollment system that's currently causing
6 (INAUDIBLE)

7 Thanks again for the opportunity to
8 testify, and we'll have more details in our written
9 testimony.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: We'll now move to
12 the final witness on this panel. Sage Schaftel, you
13 may begin your testimony when the Sergeant calls the
14 clock. Thank you.

15 SERGEANT BIONDO: Starting time.

16 SAGE SCHAFTTEL: Hi. Thank you so much. I
17 serve as Assistant Executive Director for the Early
18 Care and Education Consortium, a national nonprofit
19 comprised of the leading high-quality multi-state,
20 multi-site childcare providers, state childcare
21 associations, and education service providers. Our
22 members operate about 7,000 centers nationwide,
23 serving nearly a million children including 185
24 centers in New York State and 75 in the city.

1 I wanted to start off by sharing our
2 support for the Mayor's new Blueprint for Children
3 and Early Education and the historic investments
4 planned for the next several years to build a robust
5 and equitable early childhood system, but today I
6 really wanted to focus on one particular issues
7 that's been plaguing the childcare before and after-
8 school and summer programming sectors since long
9 before the pandemic and has only gotten worse. This
10 is the extreme delays in the processing of criminal
11 background checks for educators and staff in the
12 city. ECEC has partnered with organizations across
13 the city, and it's clear that the delays are by no
14 means limited to the 75 centers we operate but they
15 are impacted by just about every program that goes
16 through DOHMH. Meanwhile, our country and New York
17 City, in particular, are facing a massive workforce
18 crisis which is compounded by the childcare crisis.
19 Background checks are extremely important and play a
20 critical role in ensuring children will be safely
21 cared for, and we're 100 percent in support of
22 thorough background checks but the current length of
23 time clearances are taking is undermining providers'
24 ability to provide children with care and is
25

2 significantly worsening the existing staffing crisis.
3 I know this was discussed earlier in the hearing, but
4 the average wait time is around 7 to 9 months for all
5 of our providers and many of them are taking over a
6 year to go through the system, and this is causing
7 would-be educators to leave the sector and resulting
8 in classroom closures and a shortening of programs'
9 operational hours, which again impacts working
10 parents' ability to provide care. ECEC providers
11 operate in 48...

12 SERGEANT BIONDO: Time expired

13 SAGE SCHAFTEL: States and D.C. As I
14 mentioned before, the state and New York City is
15 taking significantly longer, and we do have a set of
16 recommendations that I've included in written
17 testimony, and we'll share that with all of you
18 afterwards. Thank you for your time.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. I just want
20 to thank you all again and actually want to work
21 backwards for a second. Miss Schaftel, thank you. I
22 think we share in your concerns, both myself and
23 Council Member Menin asked the administration about
24 this problem. It is quite frankly unacceptable that
25 it is taking this long to get through these

2 background checks so I personally, admittedly, was
3 not really all that satisfied with the response that
4 we got and will certainly be following up to see what
5 concrete steps are being taken. Our understanding is
6 that they're bringing on more employees to help
7 shepherd this along, but it is of deep concern and
8 one that we will continue to follow up on so thank
9 you. Mr. Brender, thank you. I appreciated what you
10 said about the workforce being clearly underpaid and
11 underappreciated. Miss McNeill, thank you for sharing
12 your personal experience. I think your exact
13 experience is exactly why the Council has put forth
14 this package and made it such a priority yours is the
15 story of so many New Yorkers around our city so thank
16 you for sharing that with us.

17 I actually had a question for Miss
18 Thomas. I had the privilege of being able to tour NEW
19 and learn more about the work that NEW is doing to
20 get women and gender-expansive folks into
21 nontraditional workplaces like construction. We held
22 in this Committee a hearing on women and gender-
23 expansive folks in the trades particularly. In your
24 testimony, you mentioned nontraditional childcare
25 pilot programs so I'm just hoping you could talk just

2 a little bit about what are the unique needs of women
3 in the construction fields in terms of finding
4 childcare on any given day? Is Miss Thomas still
5 there?

6 KATRICE THOMAS: (INAUDIBLE) I'm so sorry.
7 Can you hear me?

8 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: That's okay. We can
9 hear you.

10 KATRICE THOMAS: Some of the unique
11 challenges are that women I think overall are feeling
12 uncomfortable about the quality of the providers that
13 they have access to as a result of their low-income
14 status and dealing with some of the voucher programs
15 through the various city agencies so what they can
16 afford, they're feeling like they deserve a little
17 bit better in terms of quality and then there is the,
18 once you start working, you're 1 dollar or 5 dollars
19 over the limit so you wind up going from not paying
20 anything or paying a little bit to, just as the other
21 panelists brought up, paying 3,000 dollars a month.
22 We're finding varying levels of women just being sort
23 of in shock and thinking that union wages are the way
24 to go and then to get these union wages which are

2 deemed as good and high in the industry just to not
3 be able to pay to put your child in daycare.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. One thing
5 that I heard from some of your fellow workers in your
6 field in terms of challenges included things like
7 your hours are different, you have to get to a job
8 site really, really early in the morning and that
9 limits who's able to take your child in, a provider
10 that accounts for the hours that you work, for
11 example, or we've talked a lot today about childcare
12 deserts and if you are living in a community that is
13 one of those deserts it's tough because, in
14 construction, you go from site to site so while many
15 folks may have an additional option in terms of
16 neighborhood to bring their kids for childcare
17 because it might be the neighborhood that they work
18 in, the neighborhood of folks in the construction
19 industry, that changes month-to-month, year-over-year
20 and so I think that there are some really unique
21 challenges that yourself and your colleagues that do
22 the work that you do face, and I think it's something
23 that we'll continue to talk about to make sure that
24 we're accounting for those things as well so I
25 appreciate all of you bringing your experiences and

2 sharing them. I know that Council Member Menin had a
3 question as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much.
5 I really just wanted to close by thanking all of the
6 panelists. I was really moved by all of the comments
7 that I heard today. Incredibly helpful to hear
8 comments, first of all, as Chair Caban said, about
9 the background checks which we both deeply are
10 concerned about.

11 Also, really productive comments about
12 the website and the electronic database which we
13 really want to make sure that we get the
14 administration to improve upon so thank you so much
15 for that.

16 Lastly, I really want to thank my
17 constituent, Miss McNeill, for your incredibly
18 compelling testimony that really puts a face on why
19 this is so important and why we're so deeply
20 committed to doing this work.

21 Lastly, I just want to thank our Chair
22 for her phenomenal work in Chairing this hearing and
23 her partnership. Thank you so much.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you very
25 much. This concludes our panels so we'll now check

2 one last time for those who registered but are not
3 currently logged in for the record.

4 Just checking for Ericka Brewington,
5 Alonzo Baker (phonetic), Darlene Jackson, and Eric
6 Aurahero (phonetic), apologies for the pronunciation.
7 We'll wait one moment.

8 Also, if there is anyone logged in that
9 we have inadvertently missed and who would like to
10 testify, if you can please use the raise hand
11 function in Zoom. We'll just wait one moment to see
12 if there's anyone that we missed. Okay, we're not
13 seeing any hands and no new log-ins so that will
14 conclude the public testimony portion of this
15 hearing.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Great. Thank you.
17 Again, I want to thank Council Member Menin, the
18 staff for all of the work that was put into today's
19 hearing. I think we got a lot of good information to
20 move forward with as we pursue creating a space in
21 the city where we have truly universal affordable
22 childcare for folks. We're going to follow up with
23 the administration on the questions that went
24 unanswered and just continue to take the input.
25 Please don't forget that you still have the ability

2 to submit written testimony and can and should do
3 that. Again, looking forward to continuing the
4 discussion on this really, really important topic.

5 Thank you. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date August 18, 2022