CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

---------- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON IMMIGRATION AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL
BUDGET

---------- X

May 21, 2020
Start: 9:32 a.m.
Recess: 11:39 p.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing

B E F O R E: Daniel Dromm
Chairperson
Committee on Finance

Carlos Menchaca
Chairperson
Committee on Immigration

Vanessa L. Gibson
Chairperson
Subcommittee on Capital Budget

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Finance
Adrienne E. Adams
Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Diana Ayala
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Laurie A. Cumbo
Daniel Dromm

Vanessa L. Gibson
Mark Gjonaj
Barry S. Grodenchik
Karen Koslowitz
Rory I. Lancman
Farah N. Louis
Steven Matteo
Francis P. Moya
Keith Powers
Helen K. Rosenthal
Jimmy Van Bramer

Immigration
Margaret S. Chin
Daniel Dromm
Mathieu Eugene
Carlos Menchaca
Francis P. Moya

Capital Budget
Vanessa L. Gibson
Mark Gjonaj
Barry S. Grodenchik
Steven Matteo
Helen K. Rosenthal

Corey Johnson

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

Bitta Mostofi
Commissioner
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Scott Stringer
New York City Comptroller

Michael Mulgrew

Shantay Brown

John Castaldo

Mark Connazzaro

Donald Nesbitt

Ralph Paladino

Marlena Geeha

Ron Barber

Gwen Carr

Sara Hayes

Michael Cohen

Donay Edmond

Kelly Grace Price

Juyung Kang

Lendon Arnold

Leo Ferguson

Beverly Tillary

Yafa Diaz

Lauren Miller

Yilsom Weem

Man Yak You

Farah Salon

Tasvia Raman

Sharanya Palay

Joanne Yu

Gida Fisher

Rashny Ahmed

Darrell Cornick Becker

Regina Mitchell

Latoya Beecham

Carmen Lopez Vianel

Joanie Billy

Taylor McGraw

Kylin Kwek Ruck

Jorge Morales

Andrea Sands

Sarah Derry Oshiro

Hassan Shaficala

Denabe Akbar

Lauren Shapiro

Emma Ketteringham

Alice Frontier

Maria Bautista

Shayna Ramos

Jocelyn David Birch

Randi Levine

Dan Hanson

Mariana Cardozo

Vanessa Ventola

Stephanie Tosas

Dr. Cary Goodman

Kenrick Ross

Jesse Layman

Mohammed Attia

Matthew Shapiro

Lorcan Lawrence Otway

Christina Taylor

Hunter Armstrong

Aurora Flores

Heather Lubov

Tony Simone

Tara Giter

Emily Walker

Katie Denny Horowitz

Julie Tighe

Beatriz Diaz Taveras,

MJ Okma

Maria Lizardo

Nora Moran

Shijad Padry

Reg Calcagno

Melissa Sklarz

Aaron Siperstein

Caitlyn Andrews

Taj Sutton

Rebecca Park

Diana Ramirez

Jessatuon Balaboday

Joel Solo

Wesley Guzman

Josh Melendez

Tenzen Chofel

Calvin Huber

Diamond Feliciano

Emily Figueroa

Christopher Webstein

Meryl Lesume

Macime Almutazer

Rebecca Deltoro

Shraya Sunderam

Caitlyn Delson

Caitlyn Pace

Gillian Mendoza

Christina Dang

Madeline Borelli

Mikada Gershensen

Nima Sherpa

Victoria Ardaqua

Alejandra Duke Sifuentes

Captain Jonathan Bulwer

Charlotte Cohen

Diane Jacobowitz

Francine Garber Cohen

Gail Thacker

Katherine Delaney

Lucy Sexton

Rachel Watts

Takisha Dozier

Carol Evans

Clara Londono

Enrique Jerve

Eva Cornaka

Halley Yee

Juan Pinzon

Lisa David

David Kleghorn

Chris Widelo

Laura Mascuch

Arlo Monell Chase

Jackie Delvalle

Joanne Page

Wayne Ho

Mario Russell

Matthew Chin

Jose Payeras

Abdullah Younus

Elana Roman

Andrea Bowen

Madaha Kinsey-Lamb

Katie Dean

Mateo Vidals

Mack Graham

Giovanna Aragon Benola

Bob Monahan

Sade Swift

Maru Batista

Anh-Thu Nguyen

Sadoof Sayal

Julie Quinton

Rebecca Talzak

Sienna Fontaine

Ovie Latimore

Brendan Martin

Holly Smeltzer

Sarah Chiles

Joel Bakagrini

Robin Vitale

Greg Mahalavich

Edie Flaherty

Nancy Romer

Karen Imus

Sonal Jessel

Amy Cohen

Danny Harris

Rashida Harris

Danora Gettichu

Christopher Triber

Akela Tomlinson

Anthony Tassi

Henry Saylor

Natasha Cherry Perez

Moranique Lambert

Aida Castillo

Shane Correa

Surita Daftery

Herbert Murray

Dave Long

Arlene Jackson

Maria Iskaros

Alyssa Willens

Jessica Hall

oris Santos

Debra Act

Elizabeth Clay Roy

Hannah Anusha

Isordia Fields

Julia Durante Martinez

Marcos Barrios

Yasha Morgan

Albert Scott

Reverend John Flack

David Calvert

Juanimo Aquoya

Shannon Hummel

Suzanna Waldman

Rachel Gasdick

Scott Daly

Rachel Citron

Emily Ramos

Magdelena Barbosa

Charlene Obernower

Liliana Polo McKenna

Carolyn Yoso

Tito Siva

Ailene Byler Zuckerman

Lidia Gualpa

Osman Ahmed

Nadia Marin Malina

Brian Romero

Marisa DeDominicis

Robert Fanuzzi

Elsa Higby

Michelle Fox

Beth Goldman

Ron Rasmussen

Jeanette Zelhof

Marcia Levy

Diane Jacobowitz

James Dill

Diane Louard-Michel

Justin Lamorte

Alisa Keel

Alba Ria

Marina Cochran Gutierrez

Lorraina Carocias

Stephanie Lopez

Joseph Pierre

Rico Noel

Justin Gordeen

Melanie Wilkerson

Chip Eisenhart

Michelle Neubauer

@

UNIDENTIFIED: Chief, are you recording to the computer or to the hard drive? 10-4. Would you like us to record to the computer as well or leave it? [inaudible] on that. Ah, Sergeant Hope, if you can shut your cloud off for a moment, please.

UNIDENTIFIED: Good to go.

UNIDENTIFIED: I think you have to stop it entirely.

UNIDENTIFIED: All right, you're good now, Sergeant Hope, you can put it back on. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED: Chairs and sergeants, we are live and ready to begin.

UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. Sergeant Hannah, are you ready with your opening statement?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Ready. OK. Good morning. I ask that you please turn your devices to vibrate. Please mute your microphones on Zoom. Please ensure that you have named yourself correctly in Zoom or you may be either renamed by the Zoom host or removed from the hearing. We will begin the meeting of the Committee on Finance. Thank you. Chair, we are ready to begin when you are.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. [gavel] Good morning and welcome to the City

Council's sixth and final day of hearings on the mayor's executive budget for fiscal 2021. My name is Daniel Dromm and I chair the Finance Committee. We are joined by the Committee on Immigration, chaired by my colleague Council Member Menchaca, and the Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams. We are also joined by the following council members - Council Members Adams, Minority Leader Matteo, and, um, Council Member Grodenchik. I'm sure others will be coming throughout the day. I'm going to turn it over to our committee counsel to go over some procedural items.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. My name is Stephanie Ruiz and I am counsel to New York City Council's Committee on Finance. Before we begin I want to remind everyone that you will be on mute until you're recognized to speak, at which time you will be unmuted by the Zoom host. If you mute yourself after you've been unmuted you will need to be unmuted again by the host. I'll now hand it back over to Chair Dromm.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you again. The effects of the COVID-19 on American life and society are widespread and deeply felt. However, for

undocumented immigrants across the nation, especially in New York City, the COVID-19 pandemic compounds issues that have existed for years, exposing the inequities faced by immigrant communities. From access to health care to food assistance, the city must ensure that it provides the necessary resources and information to these commissions across the city. Recent data has shown that low-income city neighborhoods, where many immigrants live, have the most confirmed cases of COVID-19, especially in Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. I am particularly concerned with this, as I represent District 25 in Queens, covering parts of Jackson Heights, Corona, and Elmhurst, which is among the several communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. With many immigrants working in front-line industry, putting themselves and their families at risk every day, the city must ensure that there aren't any barriers or misinformation keeping immigrants from accessing the healthcare services they need during these incredibly challenging times. Food assistance is another area of concern among the city's immigrant communities. With few exceptions, undocumented immigrants are technically not eligible for federal public benefit

2 programs. This includes the Supplemental Nutrition
3 Assistance Program. Also, because of eligibility
4 restrictions the few individuals who may be eligible
5 for benefits such as SNAP may also be subject to a
6 public charge determination, which may affect their
7 immigration status. This has made both documented
8 and undocumented immigrants hesitant to take any
9 government assistance to buy nutritional items like
10 infant formula, fearing that the government could
11 deny their green card application, and if they take
12 any federal aid they could risk their, their move
13 towards citizenship. I hope to learn more today
14 about how the administration is addressing the issue.
15 Immigrants from across the world come to New York
16 City seeking sanctuary and a better life. More than
17 three million immigrants live in this city,
18 comprising about one-third of the city's population
19 and one-fourth of its work force. They help build
20 the city's economy, bring neighborhoods to life, and
21 make our culture the most diverse in the country.
22 Now more than ever we must stand united to ensure
23 every New Yorker, regardless of their immigration
24 status, can access the essential services they need
25 to keep their families safe and secure. And with

that I'm going to now turn it over to Council Member Menchaca for his opening statement.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Chair Dromm, for your, ah, just beautiful testimony to the work that is ahead of us and thank you for, I think this is one of the last days of the budget hearings and thank you for your incredible tenacity. Um, buenos dias, everyone. I'm Carlos Menchaca, chair of the Immigration Committee. So much is at stake in this next year's city budget. This budget is one of the most consequential in our lifetimes. It will reveal more than any other the truth depth of our convictions, what we as a City Council are willing to sacrifice, and for whom. Today half of all the essential workers, the workers that we are all thanking at 7:00 p.m. with cheers are immigrants. These are our neighbors who are caring for the sick, cleaning the subways, and keeping everyone fed. Yet immigrant New Yorkers and their families have largely been excluded, as you just heard from Chair Dromm, from federal, state, and city relief programs so far. Worse still, immigration enforcement has ramped up during the pandemic. It has ignored with cruel indifference the extreme vulnerablity of people in

detention, putting ICE agents, public defenders, and New Yorkers at greater risk of infection. This is shameful and unacceptable. We must take bold action against these injustices by guaranteeing food, language access, health care, and due process. That means lawyers for everyone who cannot afford it. All while battling COVID-19. As a member of the negotiation, of the council's budget negotiation team, I appreciate the competing priorities we face during an unprecedented health and economic crisis. I believe that immigrants are not a special interest. If we do not secure the well-being of over three million New Yorkers there is no recovery. Unfortunately Commissioner Mostofi for the mayor's proposed budget does not yet reflect that truth and I look forward to talking with you about that today. And I know that you believe, as I do, that a full recovery depends on the well-being of our immigrant communities. That praise for essential workers is hollow if we exclude them and so many of their children from relief. Before we start, Commissioner Mostofi, I want to thank Chair Dromm for his extraordinary leadership, that tenacity, ah, throughout this expense budget hearing and for always

fighting, always fighting and putting, and uplifting the voices of immigrants. Ah, I also want to thank the staff who has prepared this hearing, ah, finance counsel Rebecca Chasen, ah, Stephanie Ruiz, ah, Noah Brick, Imut Head, Pearline Francisco, ah, finance analyst Florentine War, committee counsel Rabadi Ujah, committee policy analyst Elizabeth Cronk, and m chief of staff, Lorena Lucero, and, ah, my legislative director, Cesar Vargas, and communications director, Anthony Chirito. I'll pass it over to you, Chair Dromm. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. And I was mistaken in the opening to say that Public Advocate Jumaane Williams was with us. I'm sure at some point today he will be, but for right now we're going to move towards, ah, the counsel, ah, the committee counsel to administer the affirmation, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I will now call on members of Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to testify. We will hear testimony from Commissioner Bitta Mostofi. Do you affirm that your testimony is truthful to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin when ready.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Thank you. Um, thank you to Chair Dromm, Chair Menchaca, and members of the Committee on Finance and Immigration. Um, my name is Bitta Mostofi. I'm the commissioner for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. Um, my testimony today provides a quick review of the challenges immigrant communities face at this moment and in this crises, um, how our office has aimed to respond to the moment and our priorities as we look towards recovery for our city together. Um, I understand the need to keep my testimony brief, so I would point you to a longer testimony that we have submitted that speaks to highlights, um, of our office's work, commitments, and priorities in the last year, including achievements and moving forward, as well as ways our programs have pivoted at this time. Um, now moving on, ah, I, I really think we cannot talk about, ah, this crisis without acknowledging both the xenophobic and racist ways it has, um, impacted our communities. By all measures the pandemic has disproportionately impacted

immigrants and people of color. Latinx, black and Latinx communities have been targets, anti-Asian racism and xenophobia as well. Many immigrant workers have been excluded from federal relief, as articulated by the chairs, even though they're disproportionately represented amongst our essential workers and displaced workers. Coronavirus affects all of us. We cannot pick and choose who among our communities should receive relief based on immigration status when this crisis affects all of us. Um, we have long understood as a city that our personal health and well-being are connected to our collective strength. Over the last two months, MOIA has worked, focused our work to respond to the needs of our communities in crises. During a crisis language access is literally a matter of life and death. We've been working across the administration to ensure both creation and dissemination of information across multiple languages. We've led the emergency management access task force. Ah, and we have worked to address both needs, challenges, and the coordination of these resources. We have see a huge rise, both in the commitment to and the demand for language access support across our agencies. To

get critical and linguistically accessible information to our communities we've published an online resource guide for immigrant New Yorkers, information about how to access healthcare benefits, food resources, and more. We spent time receiving feedback and, ah, and compiling common questions to produce a Frequently Asked Questions, questions, about the benefits eligibility, ah, and other application processes and so forth that we've received. That will be available early next week. While face-to-face engagement is not advisable we do continue to reach immigrant communities digitally. We now offer digital and telephonic Know Your Rights screening. We [inaudible] NYC classes and we have held or participated in over dozens and dozens of virtual events. Our outreach and organizing team along has participated in 47 virtual events between April 14 and May 14. We've simultaneously prioritized communications with community and ethnic media and worked alongside sister agencies with broader media strategies to advance equity in our engagement. In addition, we've seen an exponential increase in calls and emails to our community services team. In April alone the team received

hundreds and hundreds of calls from community members, and the majority expressed concern around food insecurity, financial assistance, and [inaudible]. Finally, a priority for our team has been to provide equitable access to critical services and needs identified by, for immigrant New Yorkers, regardless of status, English proficiency, or ability to pay. I won't belabor health access because this has been a commitment of ours for some time, the guaranteed healthcare plan and the launch of NYC Care. And so, so critical at this moment. But I will say with many businesses closing and workers losing their job, food insecurity has risen across the five boroughs. The city has provided 25 million to pantries and community pantries across the city through partnership with the City Council and the administration to fill gaps in accessibility. Additionally, ah, three meals a day are provided to New Yorkers regardless of status at more than 400 meal hubs citywide, and delivering premade meals to those who cannot pick up food themselves. MOIA has supported these initiatives with targeted outreach, language assistance, ensuring community feedback and more. Overcrowded housing is one of the most salient

public health issues among immigrants in New York City. As many as 22% of New York City's immigrants reside in overcrowded households. The prevalence of overcrowded housing is particularly high around, for undocumented immigrants. In order to address these concerns the city launched a temporary hotel accommodation program. It provides free hotel stays, as well as transportation, food, and wellness checks to New Yorkers who cannot isolate in their homes safely. This is available to all New Yorkers regardless of immigrant status. MOIA has both supported and advocated for the need for this initiative and additionally has collaborated with Health and Hospitals and Department of Health and Emergency Management Partners to ensure that New York City's immigrants in high-risk communities are both aware of these resources and feel comfortable accessing them. For many families and for loved ones of those who have died or passed away or experienced loss the cost of burials can be prohibitively expensive. HRA released an emergency room rule to increase the burial assistance grant amount, to increase the cap for burial assistance and to remove immigration status as a restriction. We worked with

the Human Resources Administration to expand access to this grant. We also are assisting in the roll-out of this program, lending our expertise to ensure accessibility and privacy protections. I want to thank the council for your support in this effort. [inaudible], ah, MOIA worked early to better understand the economic impact and devastation that would be acutely felt by immigrant workers and mixed status home left out of federal relief, despite their tax filings and contributions. And prioritizing this need with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City we've established the New York City COVID Immigrant Emergency Relief Program, a partnership between Mayor's Fund and the Open Society Foundation. The fund will provide emergency cash relief to up to 20,000 immigrant workers and their families, and we are working with over 30 organizations, community-based organizations, across the city to help distribute the funds. This is a limited fund. It will not address the full scope of the need and we estimate that there are well over 100,000 undocumented workers and mixed status homes who would not qualify for federal relief. However, we hope that this is a start to learn and build upon. The

COVID-19 crisis has served to remind us that immigrants are the backbone of our city and must be intentionally integrated into a recovery plan. Immigrant workers are at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. Our small business owners are deeply impacted, and, in fact, we know immigrants own half of New York's small businesses. We continue to exist in a toxic, anti-immigrant political climate. The Supreme Court's pending decision on DACA looms over our dreamers. We continue to fight back against the public charge rule, and we support the effort to ensure that communities are counted in the 2020 census while pushing back against ICE's over-broad agenda. As COVID-19 cases slow down and the possibility of reopening increasingly becomes a reality, we believe that our reopening and recovery must recognize and address the economic injustices at the root of these racialized disparities. We must ensure healthcare and worker protections. We must support immigrant-owned businesses, who are disproportionately impacted. We must continue to improve language access across our city and we must protect our families from evictions and homelessness. We believe that we can recover as a city that is

better and more just for all. And as I conclude, I want to thank the many community members and partners, the council, so many who are working to support immigrant New Yorkers and fighting to make sure that nobody is left behind. I also want to thank my time, who has risen to the occasion, ah, to jump and really figure out how we adjust our work to address this moment as well. So thank you for allowing me to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, ah, Commissioner, and thank you so much for your, ah, wonderful leadership as well. We really appreciate all you've done for our immigrant communities. Um, you know, you mentioned COVID-19 throughout your, um, opening and my district, which covers the Jackson Heights, Corona, and Elmhurst neighborhoods in Queens has been what I term the epicenter of the epicenter when it comes to the pandemic. Ah, and in fact, recent data on, ah, COVID-19 cases by ZIP code shows that nearly 50% of residents tested in my district have tested positive for the coronavirus, 50%, half of the people who live here. Can you talk about the city's outreach efforts in these neighborhoods

specifically and the services provided to its residents? What additional services and support does the city plan to provide in these neighborhoods in the future, because, um, we really have been deeply, deeply impacted by COVID, and I dare say because we have such a large population of immigrants here.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Um, yes. Thank you, Council Member. Ah, I, I first want to express, ah, you know, personal, um, ah, sentiments of, um, sorrow and expression. I know you have lost a lot of loved ones, community members, neighbors, and this is a very difficult time. So thank you for your leadership and, and, and poise at this moment. Um, I think, ah, you know, always for us, the way that we both approach the work and look at how we can advance our city in a way that's smart, just for immigrant New Yorkers, is looking at immigrants as communities and the need to ensure that we are being intentional and targeted about what we're doing in these areas and, and that was true when we launched IDNYC, right, and thinking about where our enrollment centers would be. It is true when we have looked at additional programming for legal services and so on and so forth. And certainly at this moment in time a big

1 part of our efforts in the Elmhurst area and
2 community have been, I guess I would say twofold.
3 One is, or threefold. One is, um, robust outreach
4 and engagement in the area to the, to of course the
5 best of abilities at this moment. So we have worked
6 to ensure that we are reaching community
7 organizations and providers, I would say a large
8 number of which are in those areas and operating in
9 those areas, leaders and members that have
10 communication with and contact with, helping through
11 that work identified the needs and the issues that
12 have been elevated, be it around food or burial
13 assistance or health care access that we heard. Um,
14 so we worked closely with the food program to address
15 where we heard there was over, ah, there was greater
16 demand, ah, at particular schools for, for grab and
17 go, to increase the number of locations in the area.
18 We worked with community members directly or
19 organizations to help enroll folks in the food
20 delivery program. Um, we recently distributed face
21 coverings to, um, many organizations across the city,
22 many of which are in and around that area and
23 working, um, had workers themselves or working with
24 pantries or, or doing food delivery. Um, and we've
25

had close coordination with Health and Hospitals, um, through our, our ongoing work around NYC Care. Um, we have, ah, had, ah, regular sort of office hours with Health and Hospitals for the organizations that help us conduct outreach, um, so that we can receive feedback and information about what the needs are, um, and what accessibility looks like, um, and we've included, um, Health and Hospitals as well in, um, in an ongoing series that we've been doing with community and ethnic media to get information inward out, particularly around, a recent one around testing, um, and, ah, telemedicine, as well as information about hoteling program and others. That's some of what we've been doing. I can share a robust list of organizations that we've been working with, event, events that we've been doing in the area, and so forth. But certainly concur with you about the importance of being very intentional about how we're being responsive.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. You know, it broke my heart and I get emotional to think, ah, the first days of the virus when it, of the pandemic and stood out in front of Elmhurst Hospital and I watched a cab driver pull over to the curb, pull his

wife out of the back, put her over his shoulder, and then stand in line to get into Elmhurst Hospital. It was just so, so emotional to see that happening. It was just very tough. We've seen many ways to, Elmhurst has done a great job, I have to say, in seeing and caring for everyone. Um, food remains an issue. Ah, sometimes we have, not sometimes, almost every day in my district at some site or another, ah, lines of 20 blocks long. I call them bread lines, soup lines, soup kitchens, ah, 20 blocks long of immigrants mostly, waiting to get in to get a grab and go or, um, or some type of food pantry. Um, at most of my grab and go sites in the district they're serving over 4000 people a day, um, so many of these issues still remain, even as, um, states are beginning to open. Um, we're still going to really feel the impact of, of what I would consider to be long-time neglect and inequality, inequity, ah, with regard to, um, the folks who live in, in my community. So, um, I thank you for your efforts. I just wanted to make sure that people understand exactly what's going on here in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst. And I know for Council Member Moya it's

very similar as well. So, but thank you for your efforts.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let me just talk a little bit about the public charge rule, which threatens the permanent status of immigrants who receive certain public benefits and has already caused many immigrants to forego food stamps and other programs before the pandemic. Did MOIA conduct any outreach to ensure, ah, that both the documented and undocumented, ah, immigrants were informed about the eligibility requirements for the Emergency Food Assistance Program and home-delivered meals and can you describe those outreach efforts for me?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes. Thank you. Um, this, as you know, has been a long, unfortunately, road in terms of, ah, doing everything that we can to combat the chilling effect and the impact of the public charge rule. I will start by saying, um, importantly that, um, we have, ah, sort of retargeted our efforts our this, both on the ground, which I'll describe in a moment, but also in the courts. So, um, we are currently, as a part of the, the litigation with the attorney general's

office that the city is a part of we are, um, in court, um, and had arguments as, ah, soon as, um, ah, I think this week, kind of elastic, on the 18th, um, and, ah, filing to, ah, re-raise our concerns in light of the emergency that the implementation of the rule should be clearly halted, um, at this moment in time. Our team worked diligently in the first, um, kind of few weeks of the emergency order and, and, and, um, in light of what we were experiencing and hearing on the ground to submit, um, multiple declarations from myself and from others on my team that spoke to both what we were hearing and experiencing, but also our estimated impacts in support of that motion. Um, so, just, just 'cause I think that that's critical I want to ensure that people understand that that remains a fight, um, that we continue and, and such a critical and important [inaudible]. In terms of outreach and engagement on this, um, we worked very closely, um, across both the, the food programming but kind of every agency that's been rolling out initiatives to ensure that there is clear messaging around taking care without fear, that there's clear messaging in multiple languages, um, that there's messaging that's provided

and shared that speaks to a recognition that people might have concerns, that if they do have concerns that there are resources for them to be able to get those questions answered. So, to be more clear, um, we, ah, we have, ah, expressed, um, and, ah, communicated, obviously the limitations to the public charge rule and its application, um, that many people would not be impacted, that in fact the kind of, um, services, like the emergency food that we're talking about here would not be a part of a public charge consideration. In fact, most, ah, New Yorkers who are eligible for SNAP, um, or other benefits would also not be impacted by a public charge determination and so an encouragement for folks to seek those resources if they're entitled to them and if there's a question or concern to, to get assurance, to call our ActionNYC hotline, which we have continued to be, um, to make available at this moment. Um, the team is teleworking, ah, to man the phones of that, um, hotline, um, and is available to answer any questions or concerns that people may have on an ongoing bases, um, and we've partnered with legal services providers to make sure that still if there is an actual immediate concern there can be immediate referral to

help resolve the question or concern of the individual. So, um, we, we continue to look at this. Honestly, we've been working closely with the Department of Health at looking at broader strategy and public messaging around that benefit access in immigration because it remains, um, constant and ongoing challenge, um, but it is in, ah, a focus for us.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Commissioner. And I know in your testimony you mentioned the burial program. That also is a big issue here in our community. Um, many folks want, um, their loved one's body to be sent back to the country that, ah, of origin. Um, does, does the burial program include any help with that, or can you just explain a little about how it works and who they go to seek help with burial?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Sure. We might have a visitor here and there. Um, so, um, this is a, this is a, you know, such a difficult moment in time and I think as I, I've had, um, expressed and shared the sentiment with many of you, including Council Member Menchaca recently, um, you know, critically for, for me, um, and for the work that we

do has been how are we ensuring or treating everybody with respect and dignity in this process and I know our colleagues at the Human Resources Administration have long advocated with the state, which helps, um, with the reimbursement efforts on burial assistance and the existing program to increase the allocation amount, um, to, ah, low-income New Yorkers. Um, it is, it has been quite low, right, $900, um, and so, um, what we were able to do in concert with them is to, ah, ensure that the burial assistance reimbursement amount or support amount is increased from $900 to $1700, to adjust the cap for emergency rule, meaning that services previously had to come in at $1700 or at least a receipt had to reflect that from the funeral home and now that is up to $3400. Um, and then finally to be inclusive, as I noted to all, regardless of status. And so I think importantly on this is, ah, the emergency rule also contemplates that, ah, the window in which people could seek reimbursement, even those who maybe were ineligible 120 days ago are now eligible to seek that reimbursement, so we want people who have incurred these costs, um, to feel, ah, able and know they have the right to now come and, ah, seek that

reimbursement at this time. It doesn't have to be, it's not forward-looking alone. Um, and, ah, that could be for any, any service, um, that, that you were provided through funeral services, ah, funeral homes, etcetera, as long as you can, ah, demonstrate, ah, a receipt or bill, ah, to that effect.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And how do, who do they contact to, ah, get that benefit?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Sure. So, um, the HRA program is operating, um, on the HRA website. There's information both by fax, email, address, and phone on how people can access. Um, the phone is, is, ah, is my understand has been the best way for people to access the services at this moment. Um, additionally the team, um, at HRA has been, um, opening the office one day a week for the [inaudible] challenges, um, to, to do so by phone or email. Um, so that is now is, is good, it's live, it's active and, and working, and we encourage folks to access it. Also on our web site we have information, ah, as well on this for those, um, who need it and, and would like to access [inaudible].

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK. Thank you. Let me turn it over now to our cochair, Carlos Menchaca.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Chair Dromm, and again, greetings again, ah, to you and your team, Commissioner Mostofi. I, ah, in just kind of reviewing your testimony, you speak about the language access sources that MOIA provides translational documents, etcetera. And it looks like you might be even over budget in the number of requests that have come since COVID. Um, can you talk a little about that anticipation throughout the rest of the fiscal year, and then really ensuring that we have enough for next year in the fiscal budget, um, and the mayor's approach to ensuring that we have what we need from your perspective to get things translated, for non-English speakers.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah, thank you for the question. Um, you know, I, I think all of us, we're trying to look at the silver linings in this moment in time and for me one of the silver linings has actually been rethinking how we do language access and language services, um, because we have to really, I think, appreciate the, ah, urgency of the, the speed at which information goes out, how you can move things faster, how you can, um, even better support agencies or guide agencies through

that work. So, um, you know, this is something I'm sure we will see [inaudible]. I just for some time to reorient how we do the work. But I would say in terms of increased, yes, we've, we've outpaced, um, you know, tremendously, um, kind of what we would normally do at this period of time. Ah, we have not only readjusted the budget, ah, to, to add more resources to, ah, translation versus interpretation services, um, but we have, we have gone beyond that and so we have been assured by City Hall that we should keep going, that this is a priority, that, um, there shouldn't be a limit to, um, how we are, um, focused or prioritized on dissemination of multilingual information. We've been supporting other agencies and they're, who have, as they should, contracts in, in translation and interpretation to make sure they have the resources that they need to continue doing this work. Um, we've actually received some, ah, assistance from translation, ah, ah, agencies, additional assistance to the city as like a, as, um, donation at this time as well. Um, and so, um, as I said...

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Can I pause, can I pause you and just get a sense of numbers? How, how

big are we talking in terms of the budget, ah, accommodating all the new need?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Sure. So, um, ah, we have approximately about, about 500 or half a million dollars, um, a year in our services budget, just the mayoral office, um, for translation and interpretation. We, as I said, rededicated, um, or pivoted all of the outstanding resources to this, um, effort. Um, we will overspend that by about 50 or so thousand, um, at least, um, by the end of this fiscal year. Um, and that is after we took interpretations for allocation amounts and put them into translation as well. So I think that gives you a picture and we're kind of currently trying to under the rate at which we're, um, we're spending and what it would look like, ah, to keep that pace, um, and also to, um, after crafting an interpretation.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Well, I think that you're gonna hear from council members about the, the kind of gaps. Even as you ramp up there are still a lot of gaps that are happening.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And as we think about COVID, ah, and other resources, and so I hope

you hear that and we can get to a place where we can be robust in that area as we grow. One of the ideas that we put into our preliminary budget response was an interpreter bank, a language bank. And, ah, I kind of want to get your response about that and how that can, can really help change the way that, ah, I think for a long time now the city has been, um, in noncompliance around language access. It's just, it's always a, a kind of challenge. Ah, this can really change the game for legal services, health services, etcetera. Ah, what was the mayor's response to our recommendation for an interpreter bank?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Um, so as I understand it, on the recommendation specifically there's ongoing conversations as a part of the budget process. I guess what I would add or say to that, um, is, you know, we are always interested in looking at how do you, um, how do you do language access in a more effective, efficient way and, and to the best of our abilities, um, recognize the importance of community members and leaders in that work, um, that not just from language access perspective but from a work force, um, and, ah, kind of economic opportunity

perspective and really utilizing the, um, importance of the skill that so many immigrant New Yorkers bring to the table in this work. So certainly, ah, we support ongoing conversations, um, about how to do that and to do it effectively, um, and have, um, ourselves looked a lot at this, this question and, and others, including cooperatives and, and so forth.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: OK, so it sounds like you, you support that concept of just more language access, ah, interpretation services, language bank sounds interesting, let's just keep moving forward in conversations. OK, so let's [inaudible] some of the gaps. Ah, the burial fund, I just want to say thank you. I know you've been fighting on the inside for this and we've had some really good calls on this. Um, though the application was only available in English until April or so and the applications are now available in Spanish and other languages. Can you tell us how many applications have been submitted in other languages so far and how many people have received that reimbursement? And, um, are there dedicated case workers available to answer questions in those multiple languages as people engage the program?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah, so I can't speak to the specific questions. I'd have to defer to HRA and certainly we're happy to do that and circle back to you. Um, in terms of since, since April or March, um, application [inaudible] I think what I would know, um, and observed myself is that obviously there is, um, ah, the, the expansion of the amount and the inclusion of immigrant New Yorkers is, is fairly new and so part of our effort is to get that word out to make sure people are aware, um, and able to access it and that's why also, um, the emergency [inaudible] contemplate, as I said, a retroactive period, um, 120 days so as to ensure that people aren't left out. Um, and so, um, I don't know that the team has experienced yet sort of a big spike, um, in applications, but that's why we need to get the word out and do the work together to do so. Um, the other questions around, ah, language and [inaudible] access, um, the, the services, so I know we've worked with HRA in the last few weeks to make sure that the applications are available in different languages. Um, we've also, ah, worked with them to ensure the language access, um, is available as people are calling, um, to receive the services and,

um, they have their own protocols. But additionally, um, some, ah, of our IDNYC team who speak different languages are going to be supporting the, the burial assistance program at HRA at this time, um, to further expand a multilingual work force that will be working on this.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: OK, so it sounds like you're reorienting the team, ah, to fill the gaps and getting through, through that. This, you know, I just mentioned the burial fund. We're talking about so many different pieces and I hope members kind of talk to you a little bit about those gaps, ah, 'cause this is gonna be an ongoing conversation and something we need to bring in to the BNT, the budget negotiating team, conversation so we can make sure that that, um, critical lifeline is supported. Ah, you can build an amazing program but if people don't connect to it it's not worth anything, um, and so I know that you'd understand that and that we can figure that out. Let's move over to the stimulus, ah, conversations, larger, kind of federal gap that now is on us to fill and it's been a while now, four weeks, since the donation of the 20 million dollars of private funding from the

Open Society Foundation that had been announced. Can you let us know more about the role that you're playing as MOIA and the Mayor's Fund in this process and if there are any long-terms plan for, um, for beyond that 20 million dollar, ah, private funding?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah, thank you for the question. Um, and as I noted in the testimony the, this was a, you know, for early weeks priority for us and we were immediately understood, as many of you did, what was going to happen in, um, the initial stimulus packages as we were monitoring them and also advocating around them and, um, our team, ah, in working with the Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity pulled together an impact analysis of who we thought would be left out of the federal stimulus, um, and also, of course, um, is left out of the social safety net that, um, is offered to, ah, those with work authorization. And so, um, we, ah, worked with the Mayor's Fund to prioritize, um, fund-raising efforts, um, for the, the undocumented workers and families. We, um, have also worked to help brief funders, um, donors, interested, um, partners, um, on, ah, the impacts so that they understand them, um, and can think about

and orient their response, ah, accordingly. Um, and we're happy to say that through those efforts we realized, um, ah, partnership with Open Society Foundation, um, for 20 million dollars, but also many, there are other funds across the city that, um, additionally support emergency relief for immigrant New Yorkers, specifically undocumented New Yorkers. And we have been working to just try and remain coordinated, um, across those funds, both in terms of, um, understanding impact, but also understanding, ah, sort of reach, um, and, ah, where there might be ongoing gaps or challenges. Um, so the role that we played was really that, is really sort of informing, um, what we thought the impact would be, what it would look like and mean, um, and then from our, our own and ongoing work, um, really understanding what community-based organizations were best situated, um, both by way of their reach, um, ah, with undocumented workers, um, but also sort of, ah, in the work that they generally do to support a program like this. And, um, as I will say often, ah, you know, 20 million dollars is great. It is not nearly the, the need and so there's a limit and there are challenges in figuring out how do you move quickly and reach

1 people quickly in a smart, trusted, um, and, ah,
2 efficient way, um, but, but we know people will be
3 left behind and out and so that's why the
4 coordination with other funds is important. It's
5 also why we are trying through this effort, um, to
6 receive, ah, and analyze information about who we're
7 reaching and how we're reaching them, um, so that we
8 can build on the work, um, so that we can to do, ah,
9 an analysis and evaluation of what the need is, um,
10 and continue conversations at all levels of
11 government with private partners and philanthropy
12 about what the need is. And in parallel we have been
13 doing advocacy, um, at the federal level in concert
14 with other cities, um, as well to, ah, try and ensure
15 that this next round of stimulus with a positive, at
16 least, bill from the House, um, maintains or, ah,
17 realizes greater relief for immigrant communities and
18 families.
19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yeah and we're all
20 waiting for that and until that happens we need to
21 fill the gap, and, um, I'm gonna, I'm gonna, ah,
22 we're gonna bring in some of the members to ask some
23 questions. There are some on deck right now. And
24 I'm just gonna say two things in response to that.
25

One, you're relying on a grid of nonprofits that are struggling right now to stay alive and I hope we keep them alive because they are integral to everything you just said in disseminating. So I hope that we can ensure that they stay alive. Second, um, that money came in with strings attached and that, that's real, too. Private funding and the funds are gonna say we want these funds to do X, while city [inaudible] funding can be, ah, what we need it to be and we define those terms. Ah, and the third thing I want to say, it's just not enough. And so I hope that later we can talk about what is enough and have you determined what that amount might be? Separate apart from the budget constraints, what is that number? Um, and if you want to respond to any of those that's, that's great. But I'll hand it over to the chair to walk through some of the members who are on deck to ask questions.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you, ah, Chair Menchaca. Let's go to our first council member question.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If any council member has questions for the administration please use the

Zoom raise hand function. You will be added to the queue. Council members, please keep your questions to five minutes, including answers. Please wait for the Sergeant at Arms to tell you when your time begins and the sergeant will let you know when your time is up. We will now hear from Council Member Chin, followed by Council Member Moya.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

UNIDENTIFIED: I believe Councilwoman Chin is having problems with her microphone.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just give her one minute and then we'll, we'll go to the next and come back to her. All right, let's go to our next council member and then we'll come back to Council Member Chin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Understood. We will now hear from Council Member Moya.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you, Chair Dromm. Thank you, Chair, ah, Menchaca for the great work that you guys have been doing. Ah, Commissioner, ah, always good to talk to you. Ah, thank you so much for the work, ah, that's been going on here. Just a quick question on adult literacy, if

we could. Um, it's two questions. One, ah, as of February 24, ah, the federal administration finalized a rule, ah, that would limit the access to Social Security, ah, disability benefits for non-English speakers. Ah, that rule went into effect April 27. Obviously we know that it's clear that the federal administration is targeting, ah, non, ah, speaking, ah, non-English speakers. Ah, how does this change the way in which MOIA, your MOIA, and the administration prioritize, ah, adult literacy services citywide and has MOIA conducted, ah, an analysis on the impact this rule will have on immigrant New Yorkers? My second question, really quickly, ah, is, you know, the administration and the council, we've, we've gone into partnership in the past. Ah, we did a joint investment of 12 million dollars, ah, for the adult literacy program, ah, across the city for fiscal year 2020. Ah, can you please share with us, ah, the number of participants that were served for fiscal year 2020, and, ah, the impact that it would have on fiscal year 2021 if we do not add the 12 million, ah, in funding? Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Sure. Thank you for that question. Um, I think, ah, I would say a couple of things in response. Um, I think that the, the broader need, um, for adult literacy, the importance and recognition that, um, you know, we, we estimate about 25% of New Yorkers are limited English proficient, um, and, and nearly half are, um, ah, of immigrant New Yorkers are limited English proficient and we know how important and critical the, the services and programs are and appreciate, um, the priority that this has been, um, for the council and others and, and year to year. Um, I, I guess I'll say a couple of things. In terms of the numbers of those served in the last year through that 12 million, I would want to circle back with you to just make sure, um, our colleagues at DYCD, um, share the, the, the most recent, um, number. I certainly know that it's in the thousands. Um, I know, ah, just for our, um, ah, kind of contributions to this work through We Speak and lengthy, it's, it's, ah, you know, yearly it grow, every year it grows in terms of participation, um, and at this moment in time both our programming as well as adult, um, literacy programming through DYCD has moved to the virtual,

um, and it's really critical to, to recognize the, um, you know, what we see the challenges that we see, um, in, ah, sharing of information and people knowing and exercising their rights and how fundamental English literacy is to ensuring, ah, the support for both workers that family members, parents whose children are, are going through, um, the school process and who, ah, fundamentally, you know, are going through a system that is both unfamiliar and then that's exacerbated by the, the English proficiency challenges. So certainly we share your, um, your concern, um, in, in ensuring that there is, um, ongoing support for this programming and this work. Um, we have understood this is a part of ongoing conversations around the budget, um, at this time and moving and, um, you know, we know that year to year we have been able to come in with that additional support, but, ah, appreciate that this is an ongoing conversation and certainly we have elevated the importance of it from our perspective and our knowledge of how it's impacting our communities.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: And, and I just want to step in real quick, 'cause I have like 40

seconds. But just to that point is one of the reasons why I bring this up and, and, ah, Chair Dromm, who shares a lot of the school districts in, in, ah, in, ah, Jackson Heights and Corona like I do, ah, this is critical. While we are now having our parents that, ah, are teaching their kids at home, ah, we have one of the largest school districts with ELL learners. Um, the parents, ah, don't speak the language or, ah, often the children are the translators for these parents. Ah, in this time of crisis where we're seeing that the immigrant community has been, ah, decimated by this pandemic, ah...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: ...[inaudible] I implore you to, to fight, to continue to get this funding in here. It is extremely critical on all levels, not just for, ah, some of the reasons that you listed, but it has an effect on the children, the school districts, ah, and our communities. Ah, it is critical. I know Chair Menchaca has been fighting, ah, for this as well. But I just wanted to let you k now how critical, ah, that, those 12 million dollars

are, um, for a lot of immigrant families, ah, through the City of New York. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah, if I could just build on two things. One, I failed to indicate, um, and I, um, I don't, ah, and again we can circle back more this. But our understanding is that the Democratic chair of the House, um, Committee on the Rules says that the impact would be about 10,000, um, individuals or families. Um, and so to answer the first part of your question, um, and to be responsive to the second in underscoring the importance of that. That's certainly something that we have heard from, um, parents at this time. Um, it has been one of the reasons that the efforts of our team have been around, ah, working with the Department of Education both on accessing, um, ah, ensuring that people have access to devices, and we did a huge campaign, um, around that and actually DOE saw a spike in, um, ah, requests for the devices that, in concert with some of the efforts that our team undertook. Um, and, um, we are working closely with the Department of Education actually on doing professional development using We Speak NYC, um, so we are, we are currently, um, planning to launch a series of trainings for

parent coordinators, um, family centers, and other teachers to, um, ah, ah, help them use this. This is really, for us has been intentionally a digital tool and a supplemental tool for ESLL teachers to utilize that focus on how, ah, people who are learning English are also learning about civic participation and access to their rights, um, and the importance of that kind of curricula. So I also just wanted to note and I'm happy to circle back with more that we're actually undertaking this effort with DOE right now, um, in recognition and response to some of the challenges that we have heard.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great, thank you so much, Commissioner. Thank you to both chairs.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Let's go to our next council member.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We're gonna circle back to Council Member Chin to see if her audio issue has been addressed. Council Member Chin?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: OK, do you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yep.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: OK. I [inaudible] my headset on. But I had to tell me my husband to, ah, give me five minutes. [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [laughs]

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: In, in different class. Um, thank you, Chair. Thank you, Commissioner and to your team. Um, my question is like focusing back on language access. And I'm asking MOIA's role in terms of coordination with city agency. It is not the first thing the city agency think about. Like with the Department of Small Business Services, when they put out the grant, um, to, a city government, I mean, a, a grant in one program, it was not translated. And it really took them a long time, and a lot of the immigrant, ah, businesses was not able to take advantage. Ah, not be able to, not able to apply on time and, and not able to get help. Um, and then also with the Get Food program, we have seniors who are calling and, um, everything is in English. So I think that coordination to make sure that the languages, um, are available is critical. And sometimes the city agency are not, you know, that's not their priority. There's always translating on the website. I mean,

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION AND SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET
2 come on, you know, it, it takes, always there's a lag
3 time. So I, I wanted to, to make sure MOIA have the
4 funding and the resources, um, to really take the
5 lead, um, on language access issue, because we cannot
6 rely on individual agency. That's one thing. The
7 other thing is that, um, when you were talking about
8 private funding, were there any kind of discussion
9 with the city in terms of funding that they could put
10 together that can help, ah, immigrant families more?
11 This is, they're not able to access a lot of
12 resources. And, ah, we talk about private funding,
13 but it's very little. Ah, even right now, um, the
14 good news about the pandemic SNAP, ah, that each
15 child is allowed, um, to be able to access. That's a
16 critical, you know, resource, even though it's just a
17 few hundred dollars. Um, how is the city, um, making
18 sure that, ah, family knows about that benefit? And
19 also what other program are available to help
20 immigrant small businesses, like street vendors, to
21 able to, be able to open back up when it's time to,
22 you know, open up again. Are there resources to help
23 them, help these small businesses, immigrant
24 businesses, to be able to open their door back again
25 to provide jobs and the services for the community?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Um, thank you, Councilwoman and for all of your ongoing work and, and, um, support, um, on many of these issues for many, many years. Um, um, I would say, ah, on the language access side, um, you know, ah, a, a couple of things. Um, one is this is, ah, um, as you all know, a multiyear, um, ah, effort in ensuring that cities have in place, um, as they do now, language access plans, coordinators, contracts, um, to do this work, um, and in reality it is still new, right? Um, the implementation of this work is only a couple of years old, um, and so, um, I think one of the things that we saw here early and we have been trying to address, um, and I noted earlier could potentially be a silver lining, um, of the crises is just the speed at which it takes to do the translation well, um, and what we have been trying to strike the balance of is accuracy and speed, right, and quality of the translations, but also the speed at which information as well as content needs to be out there in the community. Um, and that has been a challenge. I just kind of bluntly want to state it very clearly. It is not...

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But Commissioner, I think on that point, ah, we have to kind of get the city to acknowledge MOIA's role. Somebody has to take the lead and it cannot be the agency themselves. I agree with you. Some of the translation is not that great. But it's like we should rely on city agency. I should not have to have my staff translate information for my constituent because the city agency didn't do it. That's why MOIA needs to take the lead and have the funding resources and the authority on these language access. If you just allow the agency to do it on their own it's not happening. It's not happening correctly. So I think the mayor needs to, well, have your...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...[inaudible].

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And, and I want to...

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: [inaudible] responsive to the, is OK for me to be, continue to be responsive to the Councilwoman commenting?

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yeah, go ahead, [inaudible].

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: OK, thank you. Um, so I appreciate your, your sentiment. Look, I think, um, as we have undertaken we think, they're both important. We think both agencies should learn to prioritize and, and do this work and that's been a part of, we do ongoing trainings, we provide best practices, um, we work with them and provide technical assistance and support, as I said in my earlier testimony. We've seen an increase in people's coming to us to receive that technical assistance and support, which is great. We've been doing direct and intentional outreach where we see challenges, um, but what I was articulating by the speed and the, the nature of it I think exists as a challenge for us, too, and something that we've been trying to work out, just the importance of getting an application up and recognizing maybe it's not yet in the 10 languages, and so how do you strike the right balance? Um, and so that's an ongoing challenge that I just wanted to name, because it's not insignificant and something that we've been trying to improve upon, both in terms of speed and process to get things to move quicker. Um, but it is, it's just an important thing to be conscious and aware of. Um, to answer

2 some of your other questions, um, ah, you noted
3 around, um, small business support. Um, this has
4 been an area where we agree with you. There have
5 been many challenges at ensuring the inclusion of
6 immigrant small businesses in accessing, um, relief
7 efforts and support at all levels. Um, we have been
8 hyper-focused in the last few weeks on the, um,
9 federal SBA, um, Hero Protection Programs and other
10 initiatives. Ah, we've worked diligently, um, with
11 Univision, with cities across the country and, and
12 experts on this locally on the ground with our Small
13 Business Services to make sure material is available.
14 It's in multiple languages. The support is available
15 in multiple languages. We've done webinars. We've
16 shared [inaudible] webinars in Spanish. Ah, we've
17 had webinars done in, in other languages as well, um,
18 and so we agree and we think a part of the challenge
19 has been structural, but a part of it has also just
20 been, um, what you articulated, as getting
21 information in the right languages and providing
22 support in the right languages. But that has been a
23 concerted effort, um, with SBS and us, um, and others
24 to do that work and get that information out. And we
25 know it's been critical not just for small

businesses, but also community-based organizations, ah, ah, childcare locations, etcetera. And so that's one case. Um, we also have been working through our effort, um, we know, ah, with Open Society and the Mayor's Fund to ensure inclusion of street vendors, um, who have been left out of, um, these other relief efforts, um, again, limited but still, ah, identified and some resources to be...

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Commissioner, can I pause you? Um, there are a couple more members that need to ask some questions before, before we run out of time.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Sure, sure, sure, yeah. Why don't I take them and then I'll try to be responsive, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So let's just keep your responses, ah, just a little bit more, more, ah, clear, and I just want to frame, ah, for, for myself, ah, the kind of both, ah, Council Member Moya and, ah, Chin that there's this, there's a question about accountability, who's accountable, and, and I believe the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs is accountable to ensure that everybody is, is not in an educational, ah, way learning how to do this, but

held accountable to the immigration community, and I think that's what's been lacking for a long time. We've been, this is a battle we've been having for a long time. This is a resource question and an infrastructure question. Ah, and anything that you say in terms of what you've done is just not enough. It's not getting to where it needs to get to. So I appreciate your, your kind of review, but it's just, it's not enough, and we need to solve, and we need to solve it in this budget coming forward. Ah, Chair Dromm?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, thank you, ah, Chair Menchaca. Before we move to our next, ah, questions let me say that we have been joined by Council Members Louis, Powers, Chin, Ampry-Samuel, Ayala, Yeger, Moya, Cornegy, Van Bramer, Gjonaj, and Rosenthal, and I believe we have two more questions.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. We will now hear from Council Member Rosenthal, followed by Council Member Louis.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great, thank you so much. Sorry I'm a little bit not quite set up. Um, but thank you and, and thank you,

Commissioner, for your time. Um, I'd like to ask about your role, and I think this was part of the theme of what people are talking about is how we elevate the role of MOIA, um, but what has your agency's role been as it has to do with domestic violence messaging? Um, are you being engaged in this, ah, yeah, just what's been your interaction with, ah, ENDGBV?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Um, thank you for the question. So we, we do work closely with ENDGBV. We speak regularly, both in terms of kind of information sharing and understanding what each of our teams are doing and where we can support one another. Um, we, ah, we share the work around our task force for, um, ah, immigrant crime victims and trafficking victims, so this has been an area of focus at, as well at this moment in time, um, that we've undertaken with them, um, and also, of course, to support them. We actually do the language services for their, um, language access services for their work as a mayoral office. Um, so...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: You mean at the Family Justice Centers?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah, for, for, um, ENDGBV, yes. Any requests that they have of us we will do.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Have they requested that you translate their materials into the required 10 or 16 languages, whatever it is?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Um, I would, I would want to go, come back to you, um, with greater specificity on what they have requested. I know they have had requests but I would want to circle back with you on, on what in particular we have translated for them.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: During COVID, so just during the last eight weeks?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah. If that's what you're interested in, yes, I can get the last eight weeks.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, um, and do you, if they asked for your help, um, getting, ah, the message about domestic violence [inaudible] leave messages out do you have a network that you could use to get that, those messages out, whether they be, um, a variety of social media, flyering, whatever it may be?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah, we have actually, um, worked with them on getting out messaging through our networks that they have produced. Um, we have done so both digitally, but also we do community, um, blasts as well as community [inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right, but I mean which message have you been getting out by these mechanisms?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: I'm happy to share with you which messages and, um, as I said, which translations. I know we have been working with them and we have received messaging that we have shared out. I don't want to misquote which, which ones at this time 'cause we do so many. Um, and so I would rather just circle back with that information for you of the things we've shared.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So it's concerning to me that the one thing that came to mind for you was around sex trafficking, um, because domestic violence is so much bigger than that. And I, I'm not putting you on the spot at all. What my point of what I want to get to is, is the administration giving your agency enough money to do,

and enough staff and enough access to, um, I guess, media outlets, um, and links and other things like that to get important messages out. Um, you know, when I asked the chancellor, Department of Education chancellor, about this he immediately said that, um, the grab and go sites had, ah, domestic violence, ah, flyers right there, and, ah, you know, he couldn't answer the question about languages or anything like that, but right away he knew that. Now, it could be because he was prepped. But, ah, because I've been asking other commissioners and I've been pushing on the grab and go sites. It just strikes me that your agency could be one that could be used to get, you know, we're, we're already seeing a spike in domestic violence. There's an expected 30% increase, ah, in domestic violence. Um, I think that immigrant communities, you know, not having access to information that all the services are out there and available to them, shelters are open and available and they're trying to keep them COVID-free. The...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...[inaudible] the police will come, etcetera. I just want to know

that your agency has the resources it needs to do this important work.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Councilwoman, I just want to correct what you said. I didn't just go to sex trafficking. I said...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: My bad. I shouldn't have said that. I'm sorry.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah, I just think this is important. We, we share a task force and work with ENDGBV around U visas, which is for all crime victims, including domestic violence survivors as well as trafficking, which is what I was sharing. So we've had a shared effort to ensure that that work is continuing and we're addressing any challenges at this moment in time. And in terms of information shared, it is broadly, I know, about the Family Justice Centers, the access to those, that the domestic violence hotline remains available. I just didn't want to limit or not give you everything that I know we have shared...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: ...and work with them to get out.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Fair. I appreciate that. I'd love some follow-up.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK. Thank you very much.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: You, too.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I want to say we have joined by Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo and by Council Member Koslowitz. Ah, are there any further questions, Committee Counsel?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Um, yes. Um, we will now hear from Council Member Louis.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Good morning, everyone. Thank you [inaudible]...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Um, two quick questions. One of them you touched on already, but it wasn't quite clear. So I said let me just ask. Um, regarding the stimulus fund undocumented. How are the 30 organizations, ah, the 30 CBOs, picked for the program and do those CBOs have the capacity, um, to provide all, I wanted to know exactly what are the languages that they would be providing assistance with, 'cause sometimes they don't really cover everything, like Urdu, Creole, Yiddish, it's usually

like one or two. So I wanted to know do these CBOs have the capacity, ah, to help in all languages? Um, 'cause I think Council Member Chin mentioned it earlier the concerns with not coordinating with our offices, um, to provide suggestions and opinions on how we can better help and serve and support you. And the second question is in regards to the census. Um, I know we have to continue to practice social distancing. So I wanted to know do you have dedicated staffers, um, that is solely, um, working on census outreach? How many, and what does that look like moving forward? Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Sure. Thank you for the question. I'll start with census, um, and say that we have been partnered with census, ah, the census teams since the outset and making sure both that we're helping to inform the engagement and work with immigrant New Yorkers, um, but also that our team is supporting them in everything that they're, they're undertaking to get the word out, and we have been particularly focused at this time, um, ah, I would say specifically in areas where we know the undercount has been severely, ah, great, um, especially in certain, ah, areas, ah, ah, immigrant-

dense communities, um, like in Queens and other areas. So our team has participated in a number of the, um, efforts and outreach engagements, um, with the census team. And, again, if you want specifics on sort of the, um, the tools or the events, um, we can share that, but we include census both in our immigrant resource guide and the updates that we've been sharing out for New Yorkers as well as the virtual events and engagements that we've been doing, um, as well. Um, and, ah, we in, in March actually released with census two videos, um, that our team helped to develop, um, through our We Speak NYC program that are specifically geared to informing immigrant New Yorkers who are limited English proficient and speaking to sort of the key issues for immigrant New Yorkers around census, and we have been both teaching through, with utilization of that program through our classes, um, as well as sharing that out more broadly, um, with community organizations and others. So that's the [inaudible] we've been doing on census that I will set up...

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: We're not getting that information. So I don't know who's providing that at your office. It would be great to, to get

access to that information. I wanted to know if it was in other languages. I, I do see it sometimes, but what about folks that are part of the digital divide that don't have access to that? How are we reaching that population? That's really important.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah, so, we'll, we'll make sure to share those resources with you, of course, and I mean [inaudible] we have supported the census team, um, in other ways through, um, ah, ah, text messaging, through, um, apps that we know communities are using, um, through, ah, video, sort of, ah, messaging in different languages. Our team actually developed, ah, ah, videos in different languages that they shared out on telephone communication chats and other channels for community members. So we've done a lot, but I'm also happy to circle to make sure you have the resources that we've developed and utilized, um, to be able to share out if you don't. Um, um, on the first question, in terms of the fund, I think the, as the Council Member, um, rightly articulated, um, there were certainly certain, ah, priorities or goals, um, through the effort and, ah, through the work that the Mayor's Fund has been doing in partnership with OSF

to make sure we were reaching undocumented workers across the city and sort of the analysis for the fund is based on that impact. Um, and so, ah, you know, the Mayor's Fund looked both at, at worker, worker industries to make sure that it was inclusive, um, as well as geography and, ah, to your, more specifically to your point, language. Um, I, my understanding is that there are about, um, 20-plus languages that the community-based organizations speak, um, and, and are able to conduct, ah, um, the, the process, um, and outreach end, um, in support of, um, fund distribution and we have...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: And the last thing I would say is that we are, we have made ourselves available to support with additional language, um, capacity or support needs.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Chair Menchaca, any final words before we close this section out?

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Go.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Um, thank you, thank you, thank you to the finance team for putting this together. Ah, Commissioner, we had a lot of other questions prepared. We never even had our, ah, mainly because of COVID, our preliminary hearing. There's a lot of, ah, kind of detailed work that we want to do on the budget analysis. Ah, can you commit to responding to our written questions?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Sure, happy to, to look at the questions and see what we're able to provide, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: OK, thank you. The, the, the last piece is really a kind of, um, reorientation around services for immigrants and as we think about COVID and our response and where the mayor has really pushed for services around hospitals and what-not, I think this conversation that you're hearing today is about ensuring that our most vulnerable people have services, legal, health care, education, census outreach, connection through legal services. Are you, are you prepared to talk about how the mayor's office is thinking about all those services as essential and how you're tracking those as they hit every agency to ensure that there is real

advocacy at the end of the day for each agency to take those things on as essential. Are immigrant services essential in this budget?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Um, I, I don't, I just want to make sure I understand your question correctly. Um, or at least I'll try to answer it and then tell me if I have. So, um, you know, I think a couple of things. I think, ah, we've all, all understood, certainly our own research and data from our team has, has elevated and made, um, public, um, that we know disparities exist, um, and that they have long existed and that we need to be...

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [inaudible] right?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: And we need to think about solutions that look at how they address them, um, and, ah, we've seen some progress over the course of the last few years, in particular on health and health access. Um, and we are hoping to, to sort of address that full divide as we move towards a full NYC Care roll-out, um, and, and continuing to improve upon that work. Um, but, but to answer your question simply in, in the interest of time, ah, yeah, we're, you know, we're looking at all of this. We looked at, you know, the impact over overcrowded housing and

the ability to recover and really pushed and advocated for the hoteling program. We're looking at food access and how we can ensure we're being equitable and inclusive of New York, of immigrant New Yorkers. So that is the orientation that we have, I think, and specific on how we're, we're tracking some of these things. I think that can often be challenging, um, especially in real time. I know, um, for example, Small Business Services is trying to better understand right now, given available data, the impact, um, on small businesses, but happy to sort of better understand your question, too, and make sure we're, we're being thoughtful or considerate in the work that we're doing.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. And, and maybe my, my final point before I hand it back to the chair and close this, this hearing is that we know from our constituents and you've heard it through the members who spoke out through their questions that our immigrants and our families, ah, especially our undocumented families, are essential to the recovery for, ah, the city and that everything that is connected starts with a connection through communication and, and then building out the

programs. And that is what I think is needed in this budget to connect to our legal services, where ICE is still working, ah, to deport our neighbors and our healthcare access to ensure that people who eligible, SNAP and food, all these bases where there is responsibility from the agencies like yours to ensure that that happens, um, or else recovery is not gonna happen and we're gonna see some major, and we're already seeing, ah, decay of, of civic society in our, in our neighborhoods. Um, and so your input is gonna be important as we finalize this budget and the real empowerment that I'm feeling right now is that the City Council has the power to really build this budget, ah, and while there's gonna be some divide we will have the ultimate power, ah, to send you a budget this next fiscal year, and I'm committed to ensuring that the immigrant communities are heard and built into this budget. I hope you're all ready to catch that and, and really continue to rise 'cause you, you'll have rosen to this place of, of action but that we take it to another level, ah, and that's, that's the future of the city, and that's integral, and so let's keep talking. We have a lot of questions for you, ah, as we build the rest of this

budget. Thank you to you and your team for the work that you do every day, and thank you to our staff and our side as well.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Thank you, everyone.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ah, just before we close out, Commissioner, I had wanted to ask you about the Open Society money. Um, can you quickly give us a little description of what's going on with that, um, ah, who's getting their funding, etcetera?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Sure. I spoke briefly to this and, again, happy to circle back if a question goes unanswered. Um, so the Mayor's Fund is actively, ah, working to finalize, um, contracts with the networker who referred the organization, community-based providers across all five boroughs, as I said, speaking over 20 languages. Ah, working with, ah, undocumented workers from domestic workers to construction workers, street vendors, nail salon workers, etcetera. Um, and, ah, the, um, the effort begins essentially now, um, and I know we've, we've briefed, um, um, you, Council Member, and, and several others on, um, how best to, ah, refer or share information though those who are in need of

this relief and recognizing the limitation in that it will move fast. Um, it is 20 million dollars but that only serves up to 20,000 families. Um, and so our team remains available. Folks can reach out to us, um, constituents can reach out to us, um, as well and we're happy to support, to continue to direct folks. Our community services line remains available to support in this effort as well as others, and we are actually seeing a large spike of immigrant New Yorkers calling us for support at this time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just finally, um, do you have to be a member of these organizations in order to receive the services?

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: No, Council Member. The eligibility is, that the Mayor's Fund has included in its contracts is simple. It's you're a New Yorker or based in New York. You are ineligible for, um, federal relief or social, say cash assistance programming, um, and you've experienced some level of income, ah, loss at this time or need. That's it. So no, no other eligibility requirement, um, is, is a part of the program.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you very much, Commissioner. We appreciate you coming in. I want to thank my cochair, Carlos Menchaca, as well. We wish you luck as we go through the, ah, pandemic and, ah, we look forward to continuing to work with you.

COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Thank you, thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, thank you Commissioner.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: My, ah, obligation is here. Ah, this will conclude this portion of today's hearing. Ah, we will now hear from the New York City comptroller, um, after, we'll start with the comptroller in about five minutes. Ah, we'll come back and reconvene. For those of you who are, um, ah, staying on, please stay on the Zoom conference and then we'll start in five minutes, and, ah, mute yourselves for five minutes. Thank you very much. [gavel].

UNIDENTIFIED: Chairs, we are ready to begin. You are ready?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ready. [gavel] Good morning and welcome to the City Council's sixth day and final hearing on the mayor's executive budget for fiscal 21. My name is Daniel Dromm and I chair the Finance Committee. We are joined by the speaker of the council, Corey Johnson. We will now hear from the New York City comptroller, Scott Stringer. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues that have joined us and they are, bear with me one minute, Council Members Adams, Ampry-Samuel, Grodenchik, Menchaca, Ayala, Louis, Moya, Yeger, Koslowitz, Cumbo, Chin, Gjonaj, Holden, and Eugene. In the interest of time, I will forego my opening statement, but I will turn it over to the Speaker for his opening remarks. Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Ah, good morning. Thank you very much, ah, Chair Dromm. Ah, good morning, Mr. Comptroller. It's a pleasure to see you, as always, and thank you for testifying at this executive budget hearing. And we want to again send you our, ah, condolences for the loss of your mom, a former member of this body. We have been thinking about you and your family, ah, during this difficult time. I think that you'll agree that now more than

ever the city's leadership needs to work together towards the common purpose of stabilizing the economy, recovery, and providing assistance for those who have been hardest hit by the pandemic. We each have a role to play in this process and over the next few weeks the council must adopt a budget that is fiscally sound, responsive to the COVID-19 crisis, and does its best to protect the social safety net. And we look to you, Mr. Comptroller, to ensure that the priorities, ah, of our budget are set and that the agencies execute their work with integrity and efficiency, and also to provide guidance on managing our long-term budgetary needs, like pensions, capital borrowing, and cash flow. And to that end, ah, we will have a few questions after you are, ah, done testify to hopefully allow us to engage in a constructive dialogue on our city's fiscal health and the available budgetary options that we have to manage this crisis. And I look forward to that conversation. So I will keep it at that. I'll turn it back over to Chair Dromm so that we can hear your opening statement. Thank you again for joining us today.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. We'll now hear from New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer. The comptroller is joined by Preston Niblack, Deputy Comptroller for Budget. Will the committee counsel please administer the affirmation?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I will now administer the affirmation one time. You will be called on individually to so affirm. Do you affirm that your testimony will be truthful to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief? Comptroller Stringer?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Niblack?

DEPUTY COMPTROLLER NIBLACK: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Comptroller Stringer, you may begin when ready.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Ah, well, good afternoon, ah, members of the City Council, Chairman Dromm, members of the Finance Committee. Ah, I want to say first off thank you to Speaker Johnson, not just for being here with me today, but also the way he reached out, ah, when my mom passed away, both personally and at the City Council meeting. Ah, Carlos, ah, who is the former city clerk of your

legislative body, was very proud and honored. So you really gave our family a, a sense of great respect and I will always be grateful for that. So, thank you, Speaker Johnson, and to all the members who reached out. And I also want to say thank you, as I do every year, for the opportunity today to discuss the city's fiscal year 2021 executive budget. As you know, I always bring Preston Niblack, ah, along for the testimony and he's here today. Ah, now all of you know so much has changed since I appeared before you in March to discuss the mayor's preliminary budget. The world in which we find ourselves today looks completely different. We've all seen the headlines. Our economy is suffering. States and cities across the US have closed nonessential businesses to protect public health and flatten the curve. While that was the right decision, it has provoked the steepest, deepest recession in modern times. This year's economic downturn is likely to be twice as deep as the Great Recession a decade ago. Here in New York City Mayor de Blasio ordered nonessential businesses to close more than eight weeks ago and since then unemployment claims have skyrocketed. As of last Thursday, more than 930,000

2 New York City residents had filed for unemployment.
3 That's almost one out of four working New Yorkers.
4 The job losses are steepest in those sections where
5 interaction with the public is greatest, hotels and
6 restaurants, stores and theaters, health care, and
7 social assistance. The workers in these sectors are
8 already among the most vulnerable and economically
9 insecure in our society in low-wage jobs, living
10 paycheck to paycheck, facing systemic barriers to
11 housing, health care, and other basic needs. The
12 drop in economic activity is deeper than any we've
13 ever seen in such a short period, and the pace of
14 recovery will depend, above all, on solving the
15 health crisis. We can only open our economy safely
16 after there's widespread testing data. That data
17 will determine when and how quickly we can begin to
18 safely and responsibly relax social distancing. Some
19 parts of this economy will recover more quickly than
20 others, and that will depend on many factors. For
21 example, how quickly will people decide to travel to
22 New York again? Will theaters, museums, or sports be
23 able to reopen as social distancing lowers the number
24 of people who can congregate. Can restaurants
25 survive if they can only have half as many customers

as before? All of this will determine how fast our economy recoveries and how complete that recovery will be. Now, let me now turn to how all this impacts our city's finances and how the mayor's executive budget proposed, ah, is proposed to address these challenges. Now, let's stay, let's step back for a moment to the mayor's preliminary budget back in January before the COVID-19 pandemic struck our city with a vengeance. The budget for fiscal year 2021 that the mayor presented then was 95.3 billion dollars. The outlook for gaps in later years was around 2.5 billion dollars. But between the January preliminary budget and the April expense budget the shutdown of our economy resulted in budget gaps totalling 8.7 billion combined over the rest of this year and FY21. The loss of 7.4 billion in tax revenues was the main factor. But the shutdown also means lost revenues from building permits, parking tickets, and other fees and fines. And the state balanced its own budget by cutting or nearly shifting 800 million onto the city books. The mayor relied on three main strategies to address the gap for 2020 and 2021. First, we received roughly 2 billion in federal stimulus aid. Second, the mayor ordered a

savings or PEG program of 2.7 billion. And third, the mayor drew down, ah, reserves for nearly half the total, over 4 billion dollars. So let's start with federal aid. The enhanced federal share of Medicaid spending will cover about 500 million this year and 440 million next year. And the coronavirus relief fund for state and local governments is providing 800 million more dollars to cover COVID-related spending needs. And FEMA will cover about 250 million in uniform overtime for COVID response. But obviously what we've received so far comes nowhere near to covering the huge loss in tax revenues we've suffered because of the shutdowns. Now let's, ah, take a look at the PEG program that the mayor included in the exec budget. Unfortunately, most of the savings for 2021 are achieved by suspending or delaying programs for only one year because the mayor assumed that a continued need for social distancing would prevent them from operating. And that includes, among other things, programs that last year benefitted some 175,000 city youth, including the Summer Youth Employment Program and several afterschool programs. I want to be clear. Not only do these one-time cuts leave our city's youth high and dry this summer, but

they don't translate into long-term savings. In fact, reoccurring savings are only a small fraction of the agency budget, because the mayor simply didn't ask most agencies for reoccurring savings at all. Too much agency spending is simply on autopilot. But it's no longer possible to do business as usual. Through our audits we identified wasteful practices, uncollected revenue, and simple sloppiness that costs the city millions of dollars. And for the past three years I've been highlighting spending that simply doesn't seem to achieve results through our agency watch list, including billions spent on homelessness without reducing the number of homeless, hundreds of millions spent on bloated overhead and unnecessary contracts at the Department of Education, and millions spent on mental health programs without demonstrating results. In March I urged the mayor to task all agencies with identifying 4% of their budgets for reoccurring savings. If agencies had met that challenge and achieved that 4% target that would be worth another nearly 1 billion a year. My office has instituted a 4% PEG. I'm calling on all city agencies and elected officials to do the same. We've got to lead by example, and we need to do this now to

protect our social safety net and programs that serve the most vulnerable New Yorkers. The city should have started saving a long time ago. Expertise and experience teaches us that a responsible budget cushion equals at least 12% of spending. Despite 10 straight years of economic expansion, the city is 1.2 billion dollars below the mark. This is money that would have been enormously helpful during the city's current financial strain. So what concerns me the most is how deeply we've dug into our reserves, which, as I've noted for years, weren't really big enough to begin with. At the beginning of this fiscal year we had 6.1 billion in reserves. However, between this year and next we're using up to 2.6 billion in surpluses from the Retiree Health Benefits Trust and leaving just 100 million in the contingency reserves for next year. We are not leaving ourselves much room for error, and that's all the more reason why it's imperative to start saving, yes, now, we've got to save. Now where does that leave us? As I said in the beginning of my testimony, a great deal has changed since January. The mayor's executive budget for fiscal 21 is 89.3 billion dollars, 6 billion dollars less than the prelim budget. And the

gaps in the out years have nearly doubled compared to the preliminary budget. With reserves this low and a PEG program that relies heavily on one-time actions, we should be extremely concerned about how well we'll be able to address those out year deficits. If the situation wasn't troubling enough, the state budget update has made it crystal clear. The state enacted budget was based on pre-COVID revenue estimates and a lot of hope for federal aid. The budget update burst that bubble, revealing a 13.3 billion dollar budget gap in the state's current fiscal year. To close that gap the state is proposing to cut 8.2 billion in local aid. Assuming New York City's share of these cuts is proportionate to its share of state aid, we're looking at an additional 3 billion dollar cut that will fall almost heavily on our students because two-thirds of local aid is education. To be clear, nothing I've said here today accounts for these potential cuts because we simply don't know what and how much they will be, but we do know there's a potential for devastation. The solution to the state budget problems cannot just be cuts to our schools. We must look at all options, including revenues, to avoid an outcome that would harm an entire generation

of children. Without [inaudible] crisis Trump and the federal government utterly abdicated their responsibility to prepare and protect this country. We're now racing against time and paying a heavy price for their negligence. There is no silver bullet to economic recovery. The federal relief money is the closest we can get and we need that money now. State and local governments across the country are spending tens of billions of dollars fighting this pandemic. Most of them acted to protect their citizens by shutting down nonessential businesses and it's costing them hundreds of billions of dollars in lost revenue. There's no way for us to make that up ourselves. Congress must step up. And I want to thank our New York Congressional Delegation for fighting tirelessly in Washington for the relief we need. Relief funds must prioritize need, not politics. New York City, with more than 190,000 cases gets the equivalent of $7500 per COVID case, while Montana, with 470 cases, got 2.7 million per case. This is an outrage. Our communities are suffering and we need help. The next stimulus bill must use a fairer formula that recognizes the caseloads of economic impact are much more severe in

2 some places than in others and distributes funding
3 based on those needs. New York is the nation's
4 economic engine. Our residents and businesses
5 contribute more to the federal budget and get back
6 less than any other state, 22 billion dollars more in
7 2019 in fact. Other states contribute less and get
8 more back. In other words, our taxpayer dollars are
9 funding relief efforts across the country while we
10 are left to fend for ourselves. There's no denying
11 it. We are facing one of the most trying times in
12 our history. This pandemic has laid bare the deep
13 systemic inequities that run through our society.
14 We're seeing up close how the right to basic health,
15 safety, and economic security are too often denied
16 along the lines of race and class. Any strategic
17 approach to recovery must center these communities,
18 address these disparities, and lift up those who are
19 isolated, overwhelmed, and in dire need. That means
20 investing in historically disinvested neighborhoods,
21 where residents are more susceptible to illness
22 because of overcrowded housing and poor air quality.
23 It means strong lines of communication with our work
24 force, industry, and health experts to bring back our
25 economic sector by sector, safely, fairly,

thoughtfully, and sustainably. It means widespread testing and tracing capabilities at the scale needed to reopen our economy. When we look back at this time I want to be able to say that our government stood up for our city and marshalled all our resources and did everything we could to save lives and get our economic back on track. This is personal to me in two ways. Not just the loss of my mom, but raising two kids, remote learning and public school. I look at them every morning and I just wonder are we doing enough for them as well? So I'm happy to be with the City Council, who gets it. Ah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Chair Dromm. I understand this is the most, ah, record turnout for me testifying at a council hearing, so it's exciting to me personally. Ah, maybe I'll dislike remote learning, but, ah, remote, I didn't mean that, maybe we'd like it on remote, but, ah, I'm really glad all of you are here so we can have a discussion. And now I'll be happy to take any questions you may have.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm going go right to our speaker, who has questions. Thank you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair Dromm. Ah, thank you, ah, Mr. Comptroller. I just want to,

ah, looking at your testimony I just want to, um, go back and you mentioned that you believe, ah, there's a loss of 7.4 billion dollars in, ah, tax revenue and then additional 800 million dollars that was cut by the state, which is putting this projected budget hole, ah, for the current fiscal year we're in and the next fiscal year at least above 8 billion dollars, but that number could grow. What is your office's estimate? I see 8.7 billion dollars is what you put in the testimony. Is that your estimate, your office's estimate, of what the hole is right now for our city's budget for the next two fiscal years?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yes, and, um, look, it's subject to change. I'm trying to keep coming back, relooking at the numbers. We've said, like a week ago, that, well, we're gonna, we anticipate having, for example, 900,000 unemployment claims, people unemployed, by June. Well, it's June and we're already at 930. So it's very likely we'll update that. We PEG it at 8.7. Um, we could be more pessimistic, depending on the analysis. But that's where we stand right now, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: OK. I wanted to just ask about property taxes and, and interest rates.

Um, you represent [clears throat], excuse me, you represent one of three votes on the city's banking commission, and this year the commission recommended a late payment interest rate for quarterly property tax payers to be lowered from the current, um, late payment rate of 7% down to 3.25% in the first quarter of fiscal 2021 and then 5% for the rest of the year. Ah, the commission also went beyond its mandate to suggest that the city create a 0% interest program for COVID-impacted quarterly payers. However, the commission recommended that the 18% interest rate for semiannual payers remain unchanged. And we are really glad that the commission built up some of the council's recommendations that we put in our preliminary budget response for property tax, ah, deferral programs and we welcome suggestions and want to work together on what we should be doing for quarterly payers. Who do you think should qualify for the 0% interest rates? Should landlords qualify? Should high-income home owners qualify? I'd love your thoughts on how we should be thinking about this as we're looking at the budget over the next six weeks.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: That's a, it's very fair question. The, ah, the collaboration with the mayor's office resulted in lowering that burden for as many people as possible. But I agree with you, it's a work in progress and perhaps, ah, we can have Preston and your staff look at different recommendations. We'll have to bring the mayor's office in as well. But it is something that we should be focused on, as you have been. So, thank you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Do you think landlords should qualify for, for the reduced rate? You mean a homeowner with somebody who they're renting an apartment to in, I don't know, Brooklyn or Queens, you mean?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Well, the, there are high-income homeowners who may not have been impacted by this. I mean...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, look...

SPEAKER JOHNSON: ...like how are we determining who, do you have to be COVID-impacted to qualify?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: It's a, it's a good, it's a good series of questions. Obviously, we

want to target the people who have been most impacted. As you know, based on the data we've provided you and others, ah, the disparity, ah, in income, ah, and health disparity in so many of our targeted communities, it's pretty clear that that's where the need has to be. That's where we should go first. And I do think we should develop a comprehensive package related to that kind of relief. There's a lot of homeowners who are struggling every day. Obviously, a landlord who's doing really well is not the person I'm gonna target first. But I do think there's a lot that we can do to round this out. You know, this was a pretty good collaboration with the mayor, ah, where we really looked at the banking commission and looked at these issues, and I signed upon it because it was doing something that we hadn't done before.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: And do we have any, ah, estimate this point? Does your office have any estimate on how a program like this, ah, given the, ah, number of people that have been impacted by COVID-19 and they want to take advantage and use a program like this how that would impact the city's cash flow?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, I think that everything that we look at as it relates to cash flow, ah, we are monitoring almost on a daily basis. Ah, right now we have, ah, 5 billion dollars in cash. We're not in any cash crisis in the short term. Ah, we continue to look at those issues. So I do think that we could certainly handle what we did or we wouldn't have done it. Um, but we are looking at, look, the, the, what I can tell you today is our estimates. We've really never gone through this situation so it is subject to update and change, and I think in the budget negotiations with the mayor you guys are probably, or you folks, are gonna probably have to, the council is gonna have to be very nimble in how we react to these changes and, and try to get to where we need to be on an adopted budget.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: And, and why did the commission make a recommendation to leave the 18% interest rate unchanged?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Look, I think it's the beginning of a larger discussion, as I mentioned before. We should be talking to the council. We should come to terms on this. This was a first cut to get something done. Ah, the mayor, ah, played a

real leadership role in this and we signed off on it. But there's no question that as part of your due diligence and budget negotiations this is a wonderful opportunity for you and the mayor to continue what was built on and, and I'll work with you on it 100%.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Great. So I wanted to just get a sense, um, ah, and your testimony was very helpful today on, and I agree with much of what you said, ah, but what are the metrics that you think are most important to determine the city's fiscal health moving forward? What are things that we should be looking at to determine what our fiscal health is like as we are, um, trying to recover?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, it's a, it's a broad question, but I could give you, you know, some historic, some historic perspective. You know, this is not our first rodeo, or this is certainly an unprecedented situation. Ah, I would go back to the fiscal crisis in the '70s and look at building the broadest coalition and the broadest package of relief both to our communities hardest hit, but also looking at a real savings plan, coming up with a coalition to go to Washington to get the money we're owed. There's a lot in our history that could put

[inaudible] moving forward. When you look at, ah, the Great Recession and the moves that the council and the mayor had to make, ah, again, there's a historical perspective here. Right now I think the biggest challenge for us is federal stimulus dollars. We must get that money. Without it we are in a permanent, permanent hole that I'm not sure we can get out of. Second, we've got to stave off those state cuts, my friend. Literally, we have to stave off state cuts. We don't know what's coming that way. So we have to be very prudent in terms of savings, agency efficiencies. You know, I come to the council every year and I say please save, save, save as if our city depends on it. It's hard to get people to think about saving when times are good. Ah, when I came to the council in February and said save in good times I didn't realize that two weeks later we would be in the midst of something that who could have imagined how dire this would be economically. But I do think we need to do everything we can to show Washington that we're ready to take action. Every dollar that we spend now must have a measurable impact on the city. If we have a program it has to show results. If we can save by

1 2 getting rid of outside contracts, bloat at the
3 different agencies that we've long talked about, I
4 think we can create a base of money for 20 and 21,
5 and then all hands on deck, Washington, working with
6 Gillibrand, Schumer, working with our great
7 Congressional delegation. That is how I would
8 approach in the short term the, the economy of
9 closing budget gaps. Obviously turning on the,
10 turning on the economy is gonna be a much more
11 intense, serious conversation. My view is that we
12 should help, we should use science as our friend and
13 medical advice from medical expertise. That's why I
14 have a problem moving contract tracing out of the
15 Department of Health, if you've got a health
16 department and expertise, and I think there's a lot
17 that we can do together to open up this economy
18 slowly and carefully, ah, because obviously lives
19 will depend on the decisions that we make and we have
20 to figure out what our risk tolerance is, ah, through
21 the lens of what's medically appropriate.
22 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And what if, ah, Mr.
23 Comptroller, what if we don't get the federal money
24 that we're all fighting for by the, ah, end of June
25 statutory deadline and we have to pass, ah, a

balanced budget by state law. So if we don't get those billions of dollars that was put in that House bill, ah, that the House passed a little more, you know, than a week and a half ago, you know, what, what, what is your, what do you think we should do if, if that money doesn't come through before July 1 and we have, ah, at least an 8-1/2 billion dollar hole in our budget what is, what's your suggestion on what we should do?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, my, my view is you have to operate on two tracks. So right now the mayor has presented to you a budget, ah, for your, ah, review and, agency, the budget that we get through between now and adoption in 2020 it obviously has to be separated in some part to 2021. So I believe that you have to balance this budget. You can get there, ah, with the money that we have. Obviously, we want more. 2021 is a whole other fight and we're gonna have to use every tool at our disposal in 2021 if we don't have enough federal aid. It's hard to imagine that we wouldn't have federal aid. It would just be unprecedented. Ah, it probably would have meant we lost the election and the House. But let's assume that we don't get what

we need. Well, all things have to be on the table, you know, the state is gonna, ah, cut services and we are then gonna have to ask the wealthiest people to do a little more and step up. There's a lot of ways to pass a budget. It cannot be a budget balanced on the backs of the frontline workers, the heroes, the people who sacrificed their lives. We cannot do that. That is always the default. That's why I have a problem with cutting, ah, the, ah, the afterschool program. Ah, why would we first go after the kids? They had nothing to do with this, and yet we start cutting their futures. That's why I had a problem with the mayor talking about furloughs and layoffs. There's 10 steps between now and 2021. Don't scare the people who are risking their lives. Let's look at agency efficiencies, let's look at outside contracts. By the way, I will send you, not that I expect you to read it, I wouldn't, um, but I, you know, I've done 418 audits. Um, we've identified close to a billion dollars in potential savings. Let's review those documents. Maybe the audits that we did would be relevant to your budget negotiations. Ah, the gate, the, the main, the important thing now is we don't want to hurt direct services for the

poorest people. We want to keep city workers working. We already have close to, ah, 930,000 unemployment people. We don't want to add to that. But we're going to have to be very strategic in budget negotiations both this year, which I'll you'll get through, and then next year is the big, is the big question.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: But I'm just, I'm a little confused. My understand is the, the budget deficit that we are talking about right now that you identified and that your, that your office agrees on is the 8 point, you know, 6 billion dollars or whatever the exact number is in, ah, a budget hole. That is what we have to contend with over the next six weeks. We have to, we're gonna have to pass a budget that closes that hole, not just the sort of 2-1/2 million dollars of lost revenue in the current fiscal year that we're in, but unless we get that federal money before July 1 we are gonna have to close an 8-1/2 billion dollar hole at least, maybe more than that. It could be closer to 10 billion dollars as the IBO is, is projecting, ah, in the next six weeks. So that's part of where I'm asking for your sort of guidance and feedback and help is if

that money doesn't come through, um, and we have to potentially cut or find 8-1/2 billion to 10 billion dollars' worth of savings over the next six weeks. What areas do you think that we actually should be cutting when we're presented with those difficult decisions to total that amount of money? To total 8-1/2 billion dollars, ah, it's gonna require us to make some painful decisions, and I'd love some, ah, feedback on what you think some of those decisions should be.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Sure, sure. And, um, well, let me assure you. Ah, when you review the mayor's budget you'll find that it covers the 8.7 billion dollar gap. Ah, that's a combination of PEGs, federal aid, and reserve. So that's there. Ah, if we have to go further you've got to look at more efficiencies. You gotta look at more PEGs. There's a lot more fat in that budget. Ah, the council members, you know, the budget dance is gonna look a little different than it usually does and, you know, you're gonna have to make some tough decisions on your own. But I can tell you right now, the mayor's spending plan covered that 8.7 billion. When you review the budget you'll see that. But there

will be more that we have to do if we don't get the federal administration we need. Um, and that's just the reality of the situation.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Are there any potential cuts that you would, that you think that we should make, specific, on specific things?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: How much time do you have?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: I have time.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: All right. Well, let's start looking at the money, ah, that, ah, we spend on outside consultants and a bloated bureaucracy at the DOE, for example. Take a look at our agency watch list, ah, that we put out on Corrections and DOE and a whole host of city agencies. We have to look at the Thrive program and say, look, if it's not producing results that's got to be a real cut. There's a lot that we can do to get to that budget without hurting vital services. So basically because we never engaged in, ah, PEG programs, Mr. Speaker, in seven years, there is a lot of fat in this budget. That, that's the bad news and the good news. Ah, I do believe we can create a real PEG program. I think we really should find

efficiencies. You know, I did this in my office. I said, look, let's look, let's look at how much money is in, just in the office that we're not utilizing right now. But we gave that money to [inaudible]. And they asked us for it and we gave it to them. And I then I said, wait a minute, that's a just a one-shot. Let's go through a PEG program in our office. Can we get money back without putting more people unemployed, cutting payroll, because I do believe we don't want to put more people in the unemployment line. And you know what? We did it. We have a 4% PEG. And I think we should urge, and I think you should urge as part of the budget negotiation to get agencies when you have your hearings to come up with a spending plan. I think every elected official should do it. I think we'll find, because we weren't PEGging over the last seven years, we were spending at a great rate, that maybe that's a way of moving the budget, ah, the budget forward. So as we don't get federal aid there's a lot of steps. I've mentioned a few of them for you. But obviously I think we can get to a federal aid package that can [inaudible]. Um, but if not, the mayor has prepared

a budget that, ah, that is fiscally sound, as far we have analyzed so far.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Well, I, I look forward to working together. I think that during this, ah, really hard time it's really crucial that all of us work together in, ah, you know, in unity, um, to figure out how we can, um, you know, responsibly, ah, look out for, as you identified, ah, in your remarks, ah, but also in answering some of the questions today, how do we look out for the most vulnerable? How do we look out for the hardest-hit communities? How do we continue to lift up our essential workers, um, and, ah, I would welcome the ability to work together, ah, in that way and working with your office on things that you all have identified, as you said, through, ah, audits that have been done and through other, ah, PEGs that you've identified that you think that we should be looking at, and one area that I do think would be great for your office and the council to work together would be the Department of Education on the outside consulting contracts, which total hundreds of millions of dollars and, ah, for years, ah, you have been saying and we have been saying that we need to look at those. The proposed

cuts that the mayor put forward, ah, in his executive budget, ah, proposing, coupled with the loss of state money for education, ah, would see a tremendous loss of dollars for classrooms, ah, for children, for teachers, and we think that there are other ways to identify, ah, savings and cuts that will not impact the classroom, that are things that you mentioned, which are, ah, DOE outside contracts and consultants, um, other things. I think you mentioned, and we've mentioned before, some of the claw-back provisions in the bus contracts, ah, that exist. Ah, so I think those are some areas that, that we could work together on. I will, I will just end with this and then I'll it back, ah, to, to Chair Dromm. I know that you announced, I think it was either last week or the week before, that the Bureau of Audits recently sent a letter to First Deputy Mayor Fuleihan seeking further information, ah, that the city had related to COVID-19 prior to March 22's, ah, stay-at-home order that was done by the governor and seeking information related to dissemination of that information to and among, ah, New York agencies and officials essential questions, which I think are important that we ask, about who knew what and when

did we know it and how did that guide our decision-making process. Ah, I wanted to, to ask do you see this investigation as a useful tool for decision-makers in the future, for future crises?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yes, and, um, it's important that we look back and see what government what doing, how we were operating, what the decision-making was. Look, this virus may very well be with us for a very long time, and we owe it to ourselves to take a very serious look at the role of the different agencies, the role of the people at OEM to the people at City Hall. This has to be, ah, this has to be something that we focus on and, you know, as comptroller, as someone who looks at city agencies, I thought it was appropriate to send a letter that basically says please hold all the information, hold the emails, hold the, ah, decision-making process and make sure that we can have it. Obviously we're in the midst of a pandemic so we're not going to do anything to upset the emergency work at H&H, Department of Health, and the mayor's office. But there will be a reckoning. And, look, on a personal level, ah, there are going to be thousands and thousands and thousands of family members who

when the dust has settled is going to ask what did the government know, when they did know it, and what did they do about it? I'm one of those family members that wants very much to know. But I also am in government, like you, and I think the exercise will be important, not just for the sake of doing it, but we need to build our emergency management system in a way that will be the best in the nation, and we got tripped up here. We did not rise to the occasion. Most of that falls at the Donald Trump level, but we also have to own it here. And I hope to work with the council and providing you with the information [inaudible] your due diligence. And lastly I just want to say, Mrs., thank you for giving this opportunity. This has been my best council hearing in my life. Um, and I want to say that we have an opportunity even in this tough pandemic and fiscal situation to just give the relief that so many of our communities need. There are people who are suffering, small businesses and the like [inaudible] communities. We have got to create a budget process that fundamentally changes the dynamic. You know, people talk about a *Tale of Two Cities*. But I've got to tell you, it is a tale that was told and COVID

told it worst of all. It came for the people who are the most vulnerable with pre-existing health conditions, ah, and it's time for us to now recognize what COVID understood so well, go after the people who we have never invested in. And maybe, between the mayor's, your office, and I'll try to help, we can see better days for our city. And I thank you for the opportunity.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, ah, Mr. Comptroller. And I would, I would, ah, welcome the ability for, ah, your office and the council to work together, ah, in partnership and in coordination through this crisis. I think it's really important that all of us, ah, as we seek to get through this, ah, work together collaboratively and so I would welcome and, and ask for the ability that we do that together, ah, to band together, as you said, to lift up our city. So I really appreciate you, ah, taking the time to be here today.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I look forward to that.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: And I would look forward to that type of coordination [inaudible].

Thank you. Thank you, Chair Dromm. I turn it back to you.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. Mr. Comptroller, in the discussion back and forth before you spoke about, ah, further cuts. Ah, where do you see further cuts coming from? Without, if we don't reduce the work force where would those cuts come from?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well let me, let me start by saying, and, and I really appreciate, ah, being here, again, and I now want to just, ah, affirm to you. I agree with the Speaker, ah, that we should work together and partner given this historic pandemic. So I just want to say again not only thank you to Corey, but thank you to you for giving me this opportunity. Let's, lets start looking at what we have said. Ah, I came the you for many years and said that our savings was inadequate, and that we needed to be at 12% spend. That never happened through the good times. And now...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We were very close, Mr. Comptroller. We were at about 10%, almost 11%, if I'm not mistaken.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: You're, you're 8.9%. But let me say this...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [inaudible].

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Ah, let me, let me answer the question and you ask me another one.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So that wasn't, that wasn't done. Um, I think we have to get that done now because the first question you asked me this year is where do we cut. And I've been telling people for years that we needed to have a robust PEG program over many years so that we could identify waste in city agencies, and if we had done that we'd have a billion and a half dollars more today which would have gone a long way to dealing with some of these crises. So to me the question the first cut is what you're asking me.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [inaudible] cuts.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: OK, let finish. Let me, I'll try to answer the question as best I can. Um, here's where you don't cut. You don't first go after the children and the summer program. Because that's just a [inaudible] safe. What you really want to cut are outside consulting contracts.

You want to look at the waste in every agency. You want to take a look at 418 audits and look at 890 million dollars we've identified as potential revenue sources. And I could take you through some of big ones. There was, by the way, a great column by Errol Louis in the *Daily News*, ah, just talking about some of this wasteful spending that should be looked at, ah, and, and I think we can get there, but it's gonna take two things. One, we're really gonna have to look at the ways, and we can't balance this budget on the poor people in this city, the children, the elderly, the people with pre-existing health conditions. And I know it's a challenge, but if you really start looking at the waste that we've identified I think this could be something we could work together on, as the speaker is suggesting.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you have suggestions in terms of what contracts to look at?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So I would say that, where would I look at? I would look at our agency watch list. I would look at the bloat, ah, as the Speaker and I all talked about at DOE. I would look at Thrive. I would look at our, ah, homeless programs that has ballooned from 1.6 billion to 3.3

billion, yet we have record homelessness. So we really have to engage the Department of Homeless Services and other agencies to actually help have a plan to reduce homelessness 'cause we're throwing a whole lot of money there. I've put that agency on our watch list, Department of Corrections on our watch list. The prison population is going way down, but spending keeps going way up. We now spend $330,000 per inmate, ah, to, to hold them. That makes no sense economically. So the watch list is one area where I specifically identify waste, and then I can highlight, and I will highlight a few, ah, some of our audits that could have a real direct impact in your budget negotiations.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, Mr. Comptroller, I think we have a couple of questions. Counsel, Committee Counsel? Committee Counsel...

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, Chair?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do we have questions?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If any council members have, yes, we do, Chair.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If any council member has questions for the Comptroller, please use the raise hand function. You'll be added to the queue.

Council members, please keep your questions to two minutes, including answers. Please wait for the Sergeant at Arms to tell you when your time begins. The sergeant will also let you know when your time is up. We will now hear from Council Member Holden, followed by Council Member Gjonaj.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ah, just before...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...we go to the questions, let me say we're scheduled for [inaudible]. Before we go to, ah, council member questions let me say we have the public coming in at, ah, noon, so we need to, ah, move as quickly as possible. Ah, can you give the time back, um, Sergeant, to the council member, please?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Copy. Ready to begin.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Holden, you may begin when ready.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Um, can you hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can, Council Member.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Who's this?

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: OK, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, yes, Council Member.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, ah, Mr. Comptroller, welcome to the virtual chambers. You hear me, OK. Ah, nice to see you again.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Who's this?

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Ah, I have three questions. First of all, I applaud you, I applaud you [inaudible]...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Oh, Mr. Holden. How are you?

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Um, Thrive.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: OK.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Hi. Ah, I applaud you, Mr. Comptroller, on your oversight of Thrive and holding the mayor's feet to the fire. Ah, why not hold up, ah, all Thrive contracts, first of all? And, and I have just a couple of questions that I want to throw in here. Ah, do you believe, like some people in the city, on cutting the NYPD? And my final question is the city has invested billions of dollars in the congregate homeless shelter model, which I thought never worked. They are inhumane and many are dangerous. Now in the new pandemic world

that we live in they've been exposed. Ah, seeing this, will you consider not approving contracts for congregate-style homeless shelters? Thanks a lot.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Ah, no, I would not. Um, but let me start, let me start at the beginning with you. Um, we don't, we can't stop a contract under the City Charter unless we find tremendous evidence of waste or fraud or some very serious legal issues. Um, a lot of the times we send back contracts just because the Mayor's Office of Contracts and the agencies can't go out or answer basic questions, so we don't approve it right away. We send them back. But at the end of the day, ah, the mayor, and the mayor does, register contracts, ah, when he's had enough of our questions. So that is not a strategy, as you know, ah, that works. It just goes against, ah, you know, it goes against the City Charter and I know in the council, you know, you like to stretch these things, but I have to be mindful of the laws that I have [inaudible].

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Ah, just answering the other two questions on the, ah, on the NYPD?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You may continue, ah, Council Member Holden.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yes, um, on the NYPD, on cutting the NYPD, do you think, like some people in the city, that we should cut the NYPD in these pandemic times? Again, we don't know what, what we're going to face.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Look, we want to make sure that every agency operates at the most efficient level and the NYPD is no exception for looking at ways to find efficiencies to make sure that money can be used to deal with the budget crisis, to deal with struggling communities, and I don't think the, I think the NYPD, it would be useful to go through a PEG exercise there as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And on the congregate shelters, we, we can't use some of them now, ah, many of them. They're putting, ah, um, obviously the homeless individuals in, in, um, in hotels and the problem we're seeing here now, we're, we're throwing billions into this model, and by the way, I, I visited, ah, a shelter and it resembles a jail. So it's inhumane. So I think if we look at a different model going forward in, in the pandemic

that it could actually, ah, maybe force us to give, ah, more, more options on affordable homes or at least, ah, rooms where, ah, these, these individuals can actually feel like they reside somewhere.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, look, Councilman, you, you may recall, we talked about this that, you know, my office did the original investigations of the terrible conditions within the homeless system, ah, and basically forced the state and the city to make repairs, in my earliest years in office. Ah, I've visited the shelters. I've seen the terrible conditions human beings are placed in, ah for the only crime of just being poor or not having a home, and we have to do more to make sure that homeless people are treated with dignity. But we also have to have a housing plan that is much different than the one we have today. I've talked about it at council hearings. We're building housing, ah, for everybody but the poorest people who need a home. That has to change and that has to be part of making sure that permanent, real affordable housing, yes, let's say low-income housing, will go a long way to reducing homeless shelters.

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

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Let's go to our next council member.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear, hear from Council Member Gjonaj, followed by Council Member Rosenthal.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you [inaudible] Dromm. Ah, Scott, this is the first time that I've interacted with you since this pandemic broke. Um, I want to just extend my sincerest condolences to you and the family in the loss of your mother.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you very much.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Very, very painful. Ah, let me get to the gist of it. There's a lot and not too much time. How would you rate the health of the city's finances today on a scale of 1 to 10, and the 10 being the healthiest? Just quickly, so we can do a shooting gallery.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Ah, ah, I would, I would say we're at 0. When you shut down an entire, ah, ah, economy, ah, because of a pandemic we're

clearly at that Ground Zero mark. But I do think, but I do think we have a way forward. Ah, we have a, a budget that will be balanced and long term we're gonna have to really think about turning on and getting that revenue back. We lost 7 billion dollars in revenue in the span of two months and, ah, that's something that makes it serious to me.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you. I have a lot of questions to ask you, um, and I agree with you and I was, I was pushing even harder than the 12% on reserves, if you recall.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And it's hard for me to understand that when this administration took over the budget in 2014 it was at 70 billion dollars. Since then under this administration, under our watch, including yourself, the budget has increased by 33% and yet we still have pain and suffering out there. So 12% was never enough to begin with based on our reckless spending. So I agree with you wholeheartedly. Ah, the PEG cuts that you referred to often enough, and I just want to piggyback on a question from Council Member Holden, um, the question it when comes to the NYPD do you agree with the

mayor's position not to, to allow the graduating class, um, to commence and suspend the NYPD incoming class? Are we jeopardizing our safety, ah, and increasing crime rates because of the attrition, retirement of our officers?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I think, well, let me, let me just say, the question that you raised about the 12%, ah, you know, when this administration took over we actually had at one point a savings of 18%. So I think the lesson is that savings really comes in handy when you're in the middle of a pandemic, and, and that is lesson number. Lesson number two, though, look, I put up 4% in my office. I want you match me, you know, and let, let's put our money where our mouth is. You know, everyone talks about cutting and, you know, this and that. We gotta do something. So I call on the members of the council, my friends, let's do the 4%, let's lead by example, and let us go to every city agency and say to them we did it without laying off people. You can do it, too.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: [inaudible] lack of time, what about the NYPD, ah, if, do you agree with the mayor's suspension of the upcoming class as,

um, a good support? Do you support it or not? Because I'm worried about crime rates and I'm worried about the safety that we're jeopardizing, when you yourself know there's plenty of fat that we can cut.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Look, I think that the mayor and the police commissioner, ah, are gonna make decisions balancing the need to save money with the needs to keep the city safe. Ah, I do think, for example, that even in tough economic times, ah, police should have a specific role, ah, and we shouldn't be social distancing with police officers. We should be social, we should be social distancing with volunteers and ambassadors and community-based organizations. That's where we should be putting it, not putting the cops in a situation that's untenable, and then when you do the analysis you find out, no surprise, that communities of color have been basically the ones getting in trouble for not wearing masks and, allegedly not wearing masks, and social distancing. So there's way to prioritize security [inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I only have a minute left, Comptroller. I'm sorry. I want you answer these questions, but I only have a minute

left. Have you evaluated the impact that it would have if we didn't allow this graduating class...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I didn't, I haven't, I haven't done that analysis. If you'd like me to [inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I would love to see that, 'cause I'm really afraid of the future and what it means. In 2018 we began a project together, if you recall, reviewing the city-owned properties and the lease agreements with private renters, private landlords. I still believe the office space that we currently own as a city and occupy is not occupied to its potential. Why are we leasing property when our own office space is not fully occupied and there's vacancies? That would be a good start. This is something that we started talking about in February of 2018. I think we're gonna find a lot of savings there, ah, as we move forward. And my last question to you, um, and I hope that you're gonna give me a commitment that yes, you'll do that with me and continue looking for that savings.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I think you're 100% right about that. We should not be, and I've called out the city agencies, DCAS and the like...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: ...[inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And my last question to you, Comptroller, please answer this one. You referred to small business contributing to the federal government at 22 billion dollars. Our small businesses contribute to New York City and right now New York City's not doing right by our small businesses. It was a joke that the city allocated 49 million dollars in total for loans and grants to over 230,000 small businesses. What is the dollar amount that our small businesses contribute to the city's coffers and to get back such a fraction?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: We have got to rethink our small business planning. Ah, obviously we don't have enough time to do it specifically, but I agree with you that the help that they need is not forthcoming. You know, I look at women- and minority-owned businesses, for example. The city spends 20 billion, 23 billion dollars on procurement, hiring law firms, accounting firms, hiring food vendors, Council Member. Only 4.9% of those dollars go to women- and minority-owned businesses, and so many of our communities, like in the Bronx and other

places. So that has to change. We need to make a level playing field so people can contribute to, for city dollars. This is something we can do. We don't need [inaudible] every week. We've had 1500 businesses come in. Federal, questions about the feds, the state, and the city. There's so much that we have to do for our small businesses.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Scott, a recent report said 25% of our small businesses, all small businesses, will not reopen. 75% of restaurants and bars will never reopen. That is a disaster for our future and our economy. We need to do more and I'm looking forward to doing it with you. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. Let me just follow up on that. Commissioner, the, ah, Commissioner, Comptroller, do you support the Small Business Survival Act?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Oh, I said everything has to be on the table, including that. The question is not whether I support it, whether you support and you're gonna pass it.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, I just wanted to know what whether, what your, what your feelings are on that.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Look, I think that we have to take a real hard look at commercial space and commercial dollars. I'm going to refer you to a report I did on the whole issue of vacant store fronts and it is a dire situation. One of the things that as a kid growing up in the '70s we liked about storefronts is it created a sense of streetscape and people, energy, and the lights on, and the 24-hour city. And between what we had to do to shut down small businesses and now what we're facing, ah, we need to have everything on the table about how we're gonna repopulate our commercial space, how we're gonna do it. Obviously it's bigger than any one piece of legislation now. It's literally how we're gonna reimagine the entire city. So I would say to we should have a conversation about what is the small business gonna look like? I would argue that small business is no longer just the actual physical space in the store. The bars and restaurants have got to come out to the street, which means we have to reimagine our streets not just for bike lanes and bus

lanes, but now how can we integrate bus ways, for example, and integrate an economy with that? There's a lot of opportunity here to look at the city totally differently that, and that will mean different pieces of legislation and different ways we approach it.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you, Mr. Comptroller. I think we have a couple more questions. Ah, Committee Counsel?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. We will now hear from Council Member Rosenthal, followed by Council Member Yeger.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thanks so much, ah, Chair Dromm. Ah, Mr. Comptroller, I, too, haven't seen you, ah, to let you know my deepest condolences, ah, for your mom.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I know how big a loss that was. Um, really, really deep condolences.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you so much, thank you, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Um, I listened very intently to your, ah, testimony. I read your

testimony, so there's no need to sort of go through that again and, of course, I'm on a clock, ah, and I've heard your responses over the last few minutes as well. So it sounds like, ah, the size of the city's revenue shortfall between the two years is inching towards 10 billion dollars, um, roughly 10% of the city's budget, um, a little bit more than that. And, um, you laid out, ah, exactly what I'm hearing in the budget negotiating team. You laid out the city's response, ah, the same way that we understand it. Um, I'm wondering and fundamentally what I want to get to is what would your response to a 10 billion dollar shortfall look like, and you and I know each other, we're both West Siders, um, you know I'm all about the details.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yes, you are.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Um, so I am wondering, um, if you could, you don't have to do it now, but you mentioned, ah, that you have ideas through your audits of about, ah, a billion dollars. It sounds like it's some combination of revenue increases and expense decreases. Could you send them, ah, it is true I am not going to have the time

to read 418 audits and call out which are the most realistic...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Council Member, I, I...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So I'm hoping if that you would send over a list in priority order with the top one being not the highest-dollar one, but the most realistic. So could you create a list like that where your, you know, sort of lowest-hanging fruit first and on downwards, because yes, we're gonna need more savings and yes, all of us want to go after those DOE contracts. My goodness, in my second year I was able to help save...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I remember.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: 600 million dollars because of a corrupt contract. We could sure, you know, look into all those now. So, firstly, just set this out of the way, you can send over the priority list?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So let me, let me say this. So let, just cutting to the chase, the answer is would be happy to, ah...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great, because let me tell you one of my concerns. You mentioned

Thrive, for example. So Thrive has already been cut down to its bones in its most recent iteration by the mayor, and what's left is things that had been there all the time, like the contract the NYPD has with Safe Horizon for the CVAP program and I for one would not want to see that cut or that to be on the table. So that's why I'm asking for the specifics. I'm sure your cut to Thrive accommodates that. But that's why I'm asking for the specifics. The second thing is that was so interesting to me is you mentioned, um, tax opportunities, raising revenues in that way. And I guess I'm very excited about that. Um, first I'm wondering do you know of any opportunities that the city could do without state approval and then if there are those, boy, I'm really interested. But then for the ones that require state approval, um, and, and you should I had a, a piece come out in *The Nation*, ah, I think it was yesterday or the day before, where I articulate two, ah, tax ideas that the state could pass that could raise us, ah, frankly, enough money to get us out of this revenue sort of short-term revenue shortfall, which we could then unwind that tax once we get out of this short-

term problem in the scheme of things. What are your specific...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you. Please let me know and if you can't articulate it right now, again, if you could send over a list of your top-priority tax revenue ideas and how much money you think they will yield.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So let me, so let me, I, I will send you documentation, but let me just give you sort of my view. First is feds, feds, feds. We need a stimulus...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: No, I understand that and right now Donald Trump is president and we have a reality. Of course feds, feds, feds. We all need that. That's, that's an obvious.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: We set that aside already.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I understand, fed, fed, fed. Next, next, PEGs, PEGs, PEGs.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And if you have about a billion and we have a 10 billion dollar shortfall...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [inaudible] we could do a little more without harm essential services and harming [inaudible]...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK, 2 billion, now we have 8 billion [inaudible]...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [inaudible] then we have to look at revenues. Now most of the real revenues are state options. But, look, depending on where this goes, ah, we're gonna need everyone to step up. So just like our nurses and our grocery delivery workers and everybody who's on the trains giving their, risking their lives, our teachers, we have some people who have just fought every day for the city. And we applaud them...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: No, I understand. So do you have a specific revenue...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Let me, let me...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...tax idea?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Let me answer the question and you'll know what I'm saying. So that is one group of people who have stepped up. I've said

that people who have done well economically, the wealthiest people, also have to step up. We need their help and their tax dollars to close the budget deficit in [inaudible]...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So one of the specific ideas that I laid out...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member, Council Member, we're gonna have to move on.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [inaudible]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Well, I look forward to seeing your list, um, Comptroller, and how much money you think each of the tax ideas is worth. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you, Council Member. Ah, the next Council Member, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Council Member Yeger, followed by Council Member Menchaca.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Good afternoon, Comptroller, it's good to see you. I hope you are doing well.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Ah, you too. Ah, I have a, I have just a few questions and just a few minutes. I'm going to try to run through them as quickly as possible. First of all, I assume all of your audits to be realistic. Um, you don't have to order them up for me as far as I'm concerned. Ah, implement every single one of them is fine is by me.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [laughs]

COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Ah, I don't have a problem with that. I, I don't believe you to be the kind of, ah, imprudent fiscal conservative that, ah, that makes irresponsible suggestions. So those audits ought to be implemented and I think there are real savings there.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Ah, and keep sending them our way because there are some of us who actually read them, ah, I know one came in just a few days ago and I found interesting as well. We spoke about that at a different time. Ah, I, I'd also like to urge you along the lines of, ah, what, um, Gjonaj, Councilman Gjonaj indicated. Um, ah, you know, in our first, ah, two or three months of the session of this council, ah, a number of us identified a city

agency that was about to do a lease deal that was so outrageous, um, ah, they wanted to build themselves a [inaudible] in fact double their space and, um, and we identified it, asked a couple of questions, and DCAS pulled it back, ah, [inaudible] another look. I think that you're in a position, a unique position, to take a look at leases that are on their way to expiring or close there to and to start indicating to the city whether or not the city needs to really look hard about not renewing those, because I think that the city kind of just sometimes operates on auto pilot, and we're there, we're just gonna say let's keep on going. So I think that's something that you can do and I think you can identify real savings. Um, on interest, ah, I, I will just say that for last two years my, my first two years in the council, I voted no on the interest rate. I always thought 18% was usurious, ah, punitive, abusive in many ways, um, and in the last, ah, vote that we took, ah, 12 members of the council voted no on the 7%, seven members of the council voted no on the 18%,, um, I, the 3-1/4 and the 5 I still think are too high, and I would urge that we look at, ah, doing an interest rate first of all that looks backwards and, and

waives the April interest rate for those who could not pay, waive July, completely waive, zero, and then moving forward to the rest of the fiscal year set an interest rate that is not greater than what one could get for keeping the money in the bank. You don't want people to take an interest-free loan on the back of the city, but at the same time I think it's unrealistic to assume that people are not paying their taxes because they just don't feel like it. I think we know what people are going through and I would just urge you as a member of the commission to just keep your eye open. I am a guaranteed no vote when that bill comes up, when that reso comes up in front of the council. But, ah, that's something to look forward to. I'm, I'm gonna keep on rolling through this and then you can answer after because my clock my ticking and the clock is, ah, the bell is unforgiving. Um, ah, the, I think Councilman Gjonaj, um, asked you to take a look at the police academy, um, ah, numbers. I, I do believe, ah, I, I've said publicly I think that the class should remain. Um, my reason is because I think that the attrition numbers as we see [inaudible] you know, it's just irresponsible to say that in two years we're not

gonna need to have this class ready, ready to go, and I think we have to do it by starting the class now. I would urge you to just take a look at the attrit numbers and moving forward your estimates of what you think that's going to be, um, COVID, retirement, things like that that would reduce the level of policing to a place where it becomes just unsafe and I think you're, again, in a unique position to do that. Last, ah, you mentioned 4% of, ah, in terms of what elected officials ought to be doing. I would like to flag this for you. I'm going to do it in an open place. For the last two years, ah, for the last three years, my three years of, of voting on this topic, I have voted no on the council's operating budget. The council's operating budget is, ah, currently with the, ah, ah, budget that we, ah, proposed with my no vote, ah, 40% more than just two years ago. It was in fiscal year 18 proposed to be 64 million. We came in, we overspent it by a million. We then immediately raised it to 81 million in our first year. We overspent that by, by 1.1 million 'cause we can't seem to spend within the budget that we adopt. The next year, FY20, we raised it again by, ah, by 7.7%, another 6.2 million. We

overspent that by 2 million. And now we are 26 million dollars proposed to spend more than the last council spent walking out the door. That's 40%. We can do better than 4%. I and another, a number of other members return money every year from our operating budgets, but it doesn't go back to the taxpayers. It goes into the council's budget to spend whatever, you know, I don't know, whatever they spend it on. Comptroller, please look at it, OK? It's what you gotta do...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: ...[inaudible] don't be shy [inaudible], don't be shy, you're not shy.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: All right, well, I've never been accused of being shy, but, ah, thank you for laying out your agenda. I'll try to get to, you know, some of it. But, one, I appreciate complimenting the people in our office who do the audits. They do a great job. And thank you for recognizing that. And by the way, thank you for reading the audits throughout the year, not just at budget time. So I believe you probably sit up at night and you probably [inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: [inaudible] around here so it gives me something to do.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [laughs] Fair enough. Ah, look, the police class is delayed until July. I will crunch some attrition numbers, but it's only delayed till July. Again, in all fairness to the mayor, you know, you have to make decisions and, you know, I can't as comptroller micro manager everything. Sometimes I try, but I, I don't really want to do that. So, but I hear what you're saying in terms of your budget review. Ah, in terms of, ah, the Department of Finances issues, I think we can, I think you raise an interesting idea. Why don't we work together with DOF, ah, to make sure we bring relief. Um, you know the, the 18% piece is such a small part of the biggest commercial properties. But I can set, we can zero that, too. We can come up with a plan for that. Ah, I do want to say that the mayor did make a big move in reducing, and so we will continue to make that a work in progress, and you know how government works. You do one thing and then people say do more, and I'm one of those people. Let's do more. Ah, and lastly, in terms of the 4% idea, ah, I think the 4% will really help with the

budget, because you return money but you didn't return an employee. And when you have big budgets, like the comptroller's office and the council and the mayor's office, it's a great way to lead by example. And it's a great way for individual [inaudible]. And if we all stood up and did it then it gives us the ability to bring in the agencies and say why are you having this contract that you never moved on, but meanwhile you've got millions of dollars sitting there. Well, maybe you don't need that contract. And so I think, ah, today if we could start, ah, a pledge of elected officials, you know, you know, we'll be willing to, you know, do, I did my 4%.

COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Right.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Let's start something here. Let's all join together and, and everybody calls OMB and say we're in, and maybe that will get the agencies that have been a little shy about this to step up. And, again, we're not saying cut essential services or people, we're not. We're simply saying there's a lot of inefficiencies in the budget. We've never done [inaudible] for seven years. It's, it's sitting there waiting to be plucked.

COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you, Mr. Comptroller.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right, next question please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Council Member Menchaca, followed by Majority Leader Cumbo.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Comptroller, ah, Stringer, buenos tardes and, ah, again my deep condolences to you and your family.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you, my friend, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I want to concentrate on two areas and I know we've been, ah, talking a little bit about it, which is the NYPD budget and the significant cuts that our communities are asking for. It's not just a fiscal prudent moment and action, it's also what our communities are asking us to do, and as representatives of those communities the council has the power to, to actually make that happen with or without the commissioner or the mayor. Ah, so when the council does it and we

reduce the NYPD budget will you join us in a virtual rally, ah, that really kind of sees the reduction and celebrates the saving of SYEP and all the essential services?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Let's see how far you get before committing to, ah, ah, joining you, you know, at these, ah, victory press conferences. I actually don't like them because when you announce something and there's no follow-through, ah, we give people a false sense of victory. But I will work with you to make sure that, ah, we actually get some things done in this budget cycle.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: OK, that's fair enough, ah.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: You know what I'm saying? It's...

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yeah, no, and I, I'm talking about post. I'm talking about the very near future...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I want to see how, I'm going to have to, at some point, you know, I leave, I leave my analysis and then it's up to you folks to hit it out of the park for the sake of our city. So if you do it I'll, you know, maybe I'll

even be invited, I haven't spoken so much in this Finance Committee hearing. I feel like a member of the council today.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yeah.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Maybe I'll get invited to the budget handshake.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Well, [inaudible] with that, all of that is good. Ah, next thing is there are some folks that have been floating this concept of borrowing money and I'm not sure if that's been fully, ah, fleshed out in this conversation. Ah, Helen Rosenthal yesterday in a press conference really kind of spoke to this concept that we can, that we can do that, to really move us through this, um, possible austerity budget, which nobody wants and needs for the future of the city. Ah, have you studied that and, ah, would support the kind of move for OMB to begin to borrow money as we wait for the fed, fed, fed money to come?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So it's nice to know that we have the ability to borrow if we need it. Strategically and strategy, if you think back to how we looked at a number of these fiscal issues that we had after 9/11 where we did borrow a limited

2 amount of money, ah, the Great Recession in 2008,
3 there was always a combination package that went
4 forward. So borrowing is good, ah, if you don't have
5 to pay the debt later, right? So I'm gonna represent
6 my kids and all the children of New York City who are
7 doing remote learning. You don't want to put a
8 dollar amount that they're gonna have to pay because
9 we couldn't get our job done. So part of what we
10 have to do is make tough choices. Then we have to
11 get federal money. Ah, then we have to do all the
12 things that I suggested, though other people have
13 good suggestions. But, look, just like raising
14 revenue, borrowing is an option down the line. But
15 strategically let's get to where we have to be,
16 because it's not free money, it's not stimulus money.
17 We're gonna have to pay it back, and the debt service
18 on the 9/11 money is money we're still paying, right?
19 And the money that we borrow now our kids will pay.
20 But, again, smart budgeting is not about any one
21 thing. It's about a total package and then, and
22 look, I'm in the comptroller business, so I have to
23 imagine not just 20 and 21, but we have to look at
24 that borrowing over the next 10 years. There's gonna
25 be union contracts and labor issues and, and, and

hiring issues. And borrowing means less money for essential services if we do it the wrong way and we do it the fast way. So I have a lot of respect for, ah, you know, for Helen's ideas, but when you really put together an economic package it's a lot harder, and that's what we should all be focusing on. But, look, everything's on the table as far as I'm concerned.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you, Comptroller.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Majority Leader Cumbo, followed by Council Member Levin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Thank you so much, Comptroller. Ah, I also want to share with my colleagues in terms of expressing my condolences to you and your family, um, especially your boys, because I know how much little boys love their grandma and so I know this is very hard for them. Um, I wanted to, ah, follow up on some of the committees and statements that, ah, many of the elected officials prior to me had stated in terms of the police department. I don't think, ah, many

members of the City Council believe that we don't need, ah, additional police, particularly during this time. But I think that the challenge that we face is that the police department as it currently graduates its class are gonna continuously have the same issues in terms of much of the brutality that we've already seen. And so the police department hasn't shown any real, um, way or strategy that they've changed their training, that they've implemented officers into communities that they're unfamiliar with, that there are, ah, any checks and balances in terms of officers who, ah, betray the trust of the community, and so these are issues that are still really important to us and I don't think that it's prudent to then send an additional class into the community in a way that's going to create the level of unrest that we saw with the Eric Garner situation that created such unrest in the City of New York with people shutting down bridges, shutting down tunnels, protesting, and these sort of things, which I believe if we do not, ah, put those precautions into place and that checks and balances we're gonna continue to see a level of unrest that we've never seen in the City of New York, that's gonna defeat the very purposes of bringing in

an additional NYPD class. So I just wanted to put that out there, um, to begin. And then with the growth of the City Council in terms of its budget, when we first came into office one of the challenges that we saw was that our staff were paid significantly less than almost any other city agency, and it created a phenomenon where many staff members left the City Council to go to other agencies, um, particularly the mayor's side, and because the pay was much greater on the mayor's side than it was on the council side. So in addition to that, let's say an office in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, ah, council office, is way more money than, let's say, in Brooklyn, in, ah, East New York or Green Point or other areas. The rent is very high. So each office has the ability to spend money differently based off of where they're located. So the city's council budget in terms of how we spend money is also very important. I also want to bring attention to the Summer Youth Employment Program. I know many people have spoken about that. Can you speak to us a bit in terms of what are your solutions or how do you see, um, the City of New York moving forward with the

Summer Youth Employment Program and how can we, ah, save our youth this summer, um, through this process?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So let me, let me just address a couple issues. Um, you are 100% right about the over-policing in this city. You know, I was one of the first people who look like me to say, ah, you know, Stop and Frisk was unacceptable and I have done a lot of research and reports standing with community-based organizations to make sure that we don't target people of color and certain neighborhoods in policing and I say that to you because, once again, ah, we see another form of Stop and Frisk and that is now called social distancing, ah, when communities of color are the ones getting arrested and people who look like me in different neighborhoods are not getting arrested at the same proportion. That's outrageous. That's unacceptable. It should never have happened. We need to create an ambassador program. We need to engage not-for-profits and community-based organizations in social distancing, and we've got to make sure that this budget doesn't attack the very people who are struggling. The children, like ours, you know, Laurie, who are really going through a lot of

different times. Ah, you know, I celebrated Miles' seventh birthday yesterday and what a [inaudible]...

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: [inaudible]

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: ...doing that, right?

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Um-hmm.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So one of the things I want to make it clear is that, look, we have to be mindful of the budget, we can't overspend, we have, ah, fiscal issue. But don't take it out on the young people who need those summer jobs. Don't take it out on them. Ah, they deserve better. To turn around and say that was the first program you were going to throw under the bus, that was offensive to me. The second thing that was offensive was like well, we're gonna threaten city workers who are riding the trains and...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: And so I think there's a lot that we can do there.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: OK. Um, I had more to say but, um, I will hold for the next time. Thank you so much for your, ah, questions and

answers, and I appreciate you being here today. Thank you.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you, Majority Leader.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Madam Majority Leader. Let's go to our, I believe our last question.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. We will now hear from Council Member Levin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Great, ah, thank you very much, Chair. Um, Comptroller, um, my, my condolences to you as well on the loss. You got it [inaudible]. [laughs] This is Albert.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Oh my God. Hello, Albert. You got a good dad.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [laughs] Thanks. Um, ah, he, he likes the screen. We're trying to, ah, to limit that as much as possible. So, um, Comptroller, I just wanted to ask, you know, I'm, I'm on the, um, I'm on the budget, um, negotiating team and, um, you know, we are, we are facing, um, ah, a budget negotiation right now that, um, you know, is kind of beyond comprehension for a lot of us. Um,

me, who I've been, this is my eleventh budget at the council and, um, I was even in, in 2010 and 2011 we had to make cuts, but not, not, ah, 11% of our budget, um, and what, I mean, how do you approach, ah, or how would you approach, um, that magnitude of cuts? Because I, I was listening to, um, your, ah, discussion with Council Member Rosenthal and, you know, while, yeah, we, we would greatly appreciate, um, you know, the, the digest version of the audits that the comptroller's office has done to, to achieve savings, um, you know, we've never seen anything like this and it just, how do we responsively get to a level of cuts like 10 billion dollars? And, you know, I, I hear you about the feds. I don't have a direct line to Mitch McConnell. I heard on, on the news that they were unlikely to pass anything by July 4. Well, we have to pass our budget before July 4. So, um, you know, I don't see the calvary coming to rescue us there. Um, and, and so what do we do? I mean, what, what do you recommend as the Comptroller of the City of New York?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Ah, well, I think now you're about to earn your money. This is why you get paid the big bucks, because every once in a

generation, ah, we are called to make the tough decisions. Ah, there was a generation, my mother was one of them in the City Council back in the 1970s when the city was on the edge of bankruptcy. We had to deal with issues like this after Hurricane Sandy. We had to deal with issues after the Great Recession of 2008. We've unfortunately seen this many times before economically. Ah, I'm the first to say we've never seen anything like this, but we are going to have to create a budget that at the same time protects the short-term fiscal health of the city and create a long-term agenda for reimagining the city [inaudible] the economy, getting [inaudible] revenue. So...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right, but, but, Comptroller...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Let me say this, let me say this.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: OK.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: We need to think of revenue raisers [inaudible], we need to look at the people who have made billions in this town, and we may have to ask them to pay a little more. Ah, we've done that before in the past. But we really

have to come up with a comprehensive package, Steve. There's no one magic bullet and it's not going to get any easier for you.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: No, I...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: It's just, unfortunately.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: No, I know, it's just, we have a, our situation over the next several weeks is that we have to have a budget with the, ah, with the mayor, unrelated to, ah, any actions by the state. I don't think the state is gonna give us a millionaire's tax. I don't think the feds are gonna give us a, a stimulus, at least not by, by, by, ah, the time we have to negotiate this, and it's, we're just, we're facing, we're under the gun here to the point where, um, you know, we are, we have, we're, we're looking at, at a potential austerity budget. Are there, what are some short-term things that you might recommend us doing to forestall austerity measures?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, I don't know what you mean by austerity measures. You have access...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Massive cuts.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: OK.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Massive, massive cuts to social services, to, to education, to police and fire...

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, we, it, it...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I mean, 10% is beyond, there's not, there's no, there's no level of efficiencies that, that account for 10% or 11% of our budget. So we, I mean, that's what we're looking at. I, you know, I want to be, be clear.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, look...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: What are some short-term measures maybe that, that bridge?

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I think you should get in and grill every agency...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: ...on those, I think you should you grill every agency on those efficiencies and look at big-ticket items that have not provided results, and make sure that you are not divesting from the community's hardest hit [inaudible]. And I hope that my testimony and [inaudible] has given you some sense of where I think

we should go with this. I know you have big challenges, but I do believe that the people I know on this council, ah, from the speaker to the finance chair to the majority leader to you and your role, ah, that would work together and get there, and you want to talk, you know, [inaudible] about our recommendations and questions I'd be happy to help you as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Is there, is there anything [inaudible] any short-term measures...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member, we now need to move along. We're 40 minutes behind in our public testimony.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: OK.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I want to thank you, Comptroller, for coming. I appreciate you giving your answers and, ah, we will be working with you as we move towards adoption of the budget. Thank you.

COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you for all, giving me this opportunity. This has been, ah, this has been very helpful to me as well, and I look forward to working with all of you. Thank you, thank you, thank you, ah, Chairman Dromm. You always do a great job with these hearings. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, you're very kind. Thank you. Um, right now, ah, this will conclude this portion of today's hearing. Thank you, Comptroller Stringer for being here. Ah, we'll take like a five-minute break, no more, and then we're gonna gavel right back in and then have public testimony. We have a very, very, very long list of people who want to testify. So, um, you know, we want to accommodate everyone and, ah, we will be back shortly to do that. So five minutes and then we will start with the, um, public portion. [pause]

UNIDENTIFIED: Once again, for those just joining us we ask you to please refrain from using the raise hand function. Once again, please refrain from using the raise hand function on Zoom. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon, everyone. I ask that you all please turn your devices to vibrate. Please mute your microphones on Zoom if they are unmuted. Please ensure that you have named yourself correctly in Zoom. If you are unable to rename yourself we will contact you. Please ensure that you have made, ah, if you do not rename yourself or you cannot rename yourself the

host or someone will help you do that. We will begin the meeting on the Committee on Finance jointly with Capital Budget public testimony. Chairs, whenever you're ready.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [gavel] Good afternoon and welcome to the City Council's sixth and final day of hearings on the mayor's executive budget for fiscal 2021. My name is Daniel Dromm and I chair the Finance Committee. We are joined by Speaker Corey Johnson and by the Subcommittee on Capital Budget, chaired by my colleague, Council Member Vanessa Gibson. We will now hear from the public. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues who have joined us and they are Council Members Adams, Ampry-Samuel, Grodenchik, Menchaca, Ayala, Yeger, Koslowitz, Cumbo, Chin, Gjonaj, and Holden. Before I turn it over to Speaker Johnson I just want to say thank you to all the members of the public who are taking time out of their schedules to testify on the fiscal 2021 executive budget. We value what each of you has to say, particularly as we collectively try to grapple with what is happening in our city. Please know that even if we don't directly respond to your testimonies at today's hearings we hear you and

2 your testimony is making a difference. We have 336
3 people registered to testify today. So it is only
4 the interest of time that we cannot respond
5 individually. As a reminder, each of you will have
6 two minutes to deliver your testimony and we request,
7 out of respect of the hundreds of other people who
8 are waiting to speak that you please stay within your
9 allotted time. At the end of your panel's testimony
10 you will be removed from the Zoom meeting and you may
11 continue to watch the hearing via live, via live
12 stream for the duration of the meeting at
13 www.council.nyc.gov/livestream. Ah, and just before
14 I turn this over to Speaker Johnson, I just want to
15 thank him for, um, the amazing job he has done, ah,
16 to ensure that government can proceed, um, as best as
17 we can, ah, using these, ah, remote hearings. While
18 many legislatures and government, um, organizations
19 have not been able to operate, Council Speaker Corey
20 Johnson has stepped up to the plate with the help of
21 all of our staff and enabled us to have these, um,
22 budget hearings so that the public can remain
23 informed and participate. And I really just want to
24 say it's a tribute to, ah, what Speaker Johnson has
25

done. So, Mr. Speaker, thank you very, very much for all of your hard work.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Ah, there we go. Can people hear me?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yep.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: OK, thank you, Danny. Thank you for doing a great job, ah, chairing these hearings from your home. Ah, we've all got to, ah, see a lot of you and you've done a remarkable job under difficult circumstances and your community and your district has been one of the hardest hit from COVID-19, and even in the midst of that you have been ablely and smartly and compassionately chairing these Finance Committee hearings day after day after day, and I am just unbelievably grateful for the work you do for your district, but the work you have done the last two-and-a-half years as chair of the City Council's Finance Committee. You know, in the last two budgets you and I with the rest of our colleagues were able to work on investing in programs that really helped and served the most vulnerable, everything from Fair Fares, ah, to help New Yorkers who are living in poverty be able to get on the subway at half price, so they couldn't be locked out

of participating in our city, to, ah, investing the city's social safety net, helping immigrants and children and teachers and senior citizens and LGBT people and communities of color and immigrant-rich communities. We have done that work together. But as you have talked about and as I have talked about over the course of the last many weeks, this budget is very, very different. Tragically and sadly this budget is gonna be like, unlike any budget that we have ever had to deal with before because of the significant, tremendous loss of revenue that the city is projecting from COVID-19 and our economy being shut down, which means that we are gonna have to make choices that we would never, ever contemplate, ah, during normal times. I'm really proud that over the last, ah, two years as you being finance chair and my being speaker we have pushed the administration to set aside, ah, nearly 500 million dollars in additional reserves when not many people were talking about reserves, and a lot of people just wanted us to spend that money. We actually were pushing for reserves because we knew a rainy day would come, and those reserves are gonna help us in some ways in this year's budget. We also, just to highlight, ah, and I

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION AND SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET
2 want to thank the Finance Committee, ah, staff and
3 the finance division staff, led by Latonya McKinney,
4 we every year have been identifying additional cuts
5 for the administration, additional savings even
6 outside of a PEG program for the administration so
7 that we could find those savings year after year, and
8 the council has done that, and you have been a big
9 part of that. Before we get to the public, ah, all
10 of their testimony is valuable and important. I just
11 want to say something that I think you have been
12 saying consistently throughout these hearings, which
13 is, ah, we're gonna have to make cuts and unless that
14 money comes from Washington very quickly, ah, I hope
15 that the members of the public who are watching and
16 listening today understand just the dire situation
17 that we're in, at least an 8-1/2 billion dollar hole,
18 maybe more than that. It could be 10 billion dollars
19 is what the Independent Budget Office identified. So
20 I know there are going to be a lot of folks who
21 testifying wanting to increase dollar amounts or
22 double the amount of an existing program. That's
23 just not the reality of where we are right now as a
24 city. So, ah, we need that money from Washington and
25 the one action item that I would give members of the

public who are watching and want to testify today is to call the members of the New York Congressional Delegation and thank them. Thank them for fighting for us. And thank them for continuing to fight against Mitch McConnell and the Trump White House, who is really putting the screws to New York right now, New York City and New York State. The state can't help us. They're facing a 13 to 17 billion dollar budget deficit. They're probably going to have take more money away from us because of that. The city has the deficit that I mentioned. The only way to not have what members have talked about is this horrible budget is to get that money from Washington. So, so much of this is a moving target. Until we know when our economy is going to reopen, until we know how much money we're getting from Washington and when that will happen, that affects this entire budget. So I want to thank the public. I think the last, ah, seven years of my being a council member, ah, when Chair Ferreras-Copeland was chair of the Finance Committee and now you being chair of the Finance Committee, I have, ah, participated in these public sessions, listening to the public to understand what their needs are. And I

want to thank you for chairing this today. You've done a great job, Danny, throughout this entire process. I'm incredibly proud of you. I'm proud of your work as a council member. I'm proud of, ah, you being a great friend and the values that you hold for our city. You've done a remarkable and wonderful job and the City of New York should be proud of you as well. So I will turn it back to you so that we can begin this public testimony. And, again, I want to thank my staff and I want to thank the staff of the Finance Committee, led by Latonya McKinney, for their hard work on this. Thank you, Chair Dromm.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much for your kind words. I have to tell you, though, it wouldn't be possible unless I had a wonderful cochair in Vanessa Gibson, and, ah, she really knows her stuff. She's taken on the aspect of the capital budget, ah, a difficult job, something hard to understand, and she's done it enthusiastically, professionally, and, ah, with compassion for everyone. And she represents her district up in the Bronx very, very well. And I now want to give her the opportunity to say a few words.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Before you turn it over to her, ah, Vanessa is the best, and she and I did an amazing, I didn't even know she was on here.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: I'm here.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Ah, she and I did an amazing town hall together the other night and, ah, I am so proud of her. I'm proud of the work, you see her outside right now because literally from morning until night she is working in her district, meeting families, going to public housing developments, responding to constituents. She and I did a two-hour town hall, ah, in her district the other night and she is, ah, just one of the, the best members of the City Council. So, I love you, Vanessa, and I'm grateful to your leadership and being a great [inaudible] of Danny throughout this entire process as well. Thank you for everything, and I, I turn it over to you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much and good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Speaker Corey Johnson. Thank you to our amazing chair, Danny Dromm, who has worked so hard during this budget process, holding all of these virtual hearings, the first ever for the City Council. We are so grateful

for you, Danny, to you and your staff. I know it's not been easy. I've joined you as much as I could to make sure that we are responsible and we are responsive to all New Yorkers during this process and certainly I want to thank the speaker for his leadership. We've talked so much during this pandemic about how we can do more as a council, not just during the budget but certainly in our communities, and I'm so grateful for your friendship, for your leadership, and everything that you have done on behalf of not just my borough of the Bronx, but on behalf of the City of New York, and Latonya McKinney and all of our unit heads and deputy directors in the finance division, all of our analysts. Thank you, thank you, thank you for helping the members of the council with all of our hearings, all of the data, the information. We appreciate all of your work, and I know today is going to be a long afternoon, over 300 New Yorkers have signed up to testify. But that just speaks volumes to the importance of the work we're doing. This budget, this executive budget for FY21 is going to have a real impact on all New Yorkers, from all walks of life, all ZIP codes across the City of New

1 York. So it's important for all of us, as the
2 speaker and our chair continuously talks about the
3 urgent need for federal support and federal dollars.
4 We cannot do this by ourselves as a city. We need
5 federal support. We need to make sure that we're
6 working with our partners in Congress and in the US
7 Senate, and certainly all of you. I want to thank
8 all New Yorkers, first responders, essential workers,
9 everyone on the ground for what you've done, our not-
10 for-profits, our unions, our teachers, educators,
11 everyone, thank you so much for what you have done on
12 behalf of your members, your constituents, your
13 clients, your families, your neighbors. We are all
14 in this together as New Yorkers and only together
15 will we survive this pandemic and obviously learn a
16 lot and rebound and heal as a community. Ah, we are
17 grateful for all of you, and certainly we have to
18 express condolences to all of those who have been
19 deeply affected by COVID-19, those who may have lost
20 a loved one, a family member, a friend, we mourn with
21 you, and those that are on the road to recovery,
22 thousands of New Yorkers have survived COVID and are
23 here to tell their story, and we appreciate that. So
24 I look forward to today's hearing. Thank you,
25

Speaker. Thank you, Chair Dromm. And thank you to all of my colleagues, those of you that chaired hearings as well these past couple of weeks. Thank you to the finance division, and let's have our hearing, and thank you all for everything you're doing. God bless you all.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, and I want to echo your sentiments in regard to Latonya McKinney, ah, Regina Pareda Ryan, yay finance team. They have been so [inaudible]...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...so professional. I love them and I would not be where I'm at without them. Thank you so much, um, ah, Latonya and Regina. Of course to our council, to Rebecca Chasen, to Noah Brick, to Stephanie Ruiz, thank you for your professionalism. Thank you for your guidance. They've been with me every step of the way on all of these virtual, ah, hearings as well. So, thank you very much and, ah, we can finally say that we're now going to begin the public portion of this hearing, um, and, ah, we will start with the first, um, person from the public who wants to give testimony. Counsel, can you please call up the first panel?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, thank you, Chair Dromm. Panelists, as a reminder, you will be on mute until it is time for you to testify, at which time your name will be called and you will be unmuted by the Zoom host.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And let me just also thank Nathan Cobb for his work as well, because I left him out by mistake. Nathan, you're super-spectacular. I thank you and I hope Robin has not been, ah, too, ah, much of a pest, but a good pest to you [laughs]. But thank you, Nathan, as well.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Panelists, if you mute yourself after you have been unmuted you will need to be unmuted again by the host. You have been renamed with your panel number to give you a sense of when you may be called, and please do not, ah, use the raise, the virtual raise hand function in Zoom. Please wait for the Sergeant at Arms to tell you when your time begins, and the sergeant will let you know when your time is up. As a reminder, you have two minutes for your testimony. After your panel has finished testifying you will be removed from the Zoom meeting by the host and you may continue watching the hearing at www.council.nyc.gov/livestream. We will

now hear from the first panel, which will be Michael Mulgrew, Shantay Brown, John Castaldo, and Mark Connazzaro.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now..

MICHAEL MULGREW: Ah, thank you very much. Ah. My name is Michael Mulgrew and I want to introduced, ah, Ms., ah, Shantay Brown from PS-80 in Queens, ah, John Castaldo from the High School for Public Service, who are joining us, and, ah, Mark, if it's all right with you I'd like to [inaudible] and start.

MARK CONNAZZARO: Absolutely.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Nice to see you Mark, and, ah, Michael. It's Corey. Thank you guys for being here, both of you. You're, you're...

MICHAEL MULGREW: [inaudible].

SPEAKER JOHNSON: I want to, I want to just say I'm so sorry about all the losses that you all have suffered of your members and the hard work of the teachers and principals and assistant principals have continued to do under the most trying circumstances, the number of families that your members have served is heroic and inspiring. So make sure we put time back on the clock 'cause I just took

some of their time, but I want to thank Michael and Mark and all their members, and I want to thank them for being here today.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you, Corey.

MARK CONNAZZARO: Thank you, Corey.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: And reset the time. Time starts now.

SHANTAY BROWN: Um, my name is Shantay Brown. Um, I am actually a second-grade teacher at Public School 80. Thank you. Um, I just want to walk you through my day, my weekdays. My weekdays start at 8:15, where I virtually meet with my fellow colleagues and administration. By 8:45 I'm gathered with my class together via the Google Meet, the four walls [inaudible] learning happens every day. I plan and prepare daily Google slides and colorful anchor charts and support my students in the Google classroom platform. Making sure that social interaction is present, that human connection that shows the passion for learning and ability to identify the difference between a mistake and an error, comforting words of you got this. When Google meeting ends the students return to their Google classroom to continue their work. I'm so impressed

that my second-graders are able to revise, edit, and resubmit a Google document, something I did not imagine that I could have ever taught them. While today I'm answering questions of their, their parents, and I also try my best to stay up to date. Also [inaudible] their parents, content, I have a dad that messages me all the time, Ms. Brown, I'm not a teacher, as he tries his best to reinforce my math. Um, also I have parents that are frontline workers, essential workers, that message me at 2:30 in the morning when they get home. It's all appropriate because we're all working to help the students. Parents are juggling a lot. Some of them have been sick themselves. They are trying to help their children. One of our students even lost a parent due to COVID-19. Mostly, the parents just need know that we're there together, we're in this together. They're still learning, despite everything. When we are, or if we are back in our physical school, we do not need anything taken away. Our children will need more, not less. Please honor the work they have and we as educators have done to project our school budgets. Thank you. I tried to put my video on, but it wouldn't let me. Sorry.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You're a hero and you should know that, and all of the teachers in New York City who have done what you've done are heroes. Thank you so much for your testimony.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Now I'd like if we could get John.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: TIME STARTS NOW.

JOHN CASTALDO: Good afternoon. My name is John Castaldo and I'm a social studies teacher at the High School for Public Service in Crown Heights in Brooklyn. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with distant learning, distance learning, during this pandemic. Ah, I'd love to be physically teaching my students in my classroom, but learning continues, regardless. Of course it looks different, but again, it continues. It's an all-hands-on-deck approach. The vast majority of teachers in my school are teaching live classes where we meet anywhere from two to four days a week. I personally teach live every Tuesday and Friday because those are the days when I [inaudible] with my classes. Our teachers want to see their students. I can't stress this enough. But we need to be flexible because some of our students are

unable to log in during class time and often these are some of our most vulnerable students. As a result, our teachers have said that they would like to keep a mix of live instruction, recorded instruction, and small group instruction, as well as post content and materials that students can access when they are able. Indeed, my colleagues and I are responding to student emails well into the evening because that's when some students are able to log on. Our school has developed multiple ways to support students, including twice weekly advisory classes that are live. Every teacher has daily office hours. We have virtual town hall meetings with class periods, ah, teacher outreach to students via phone, email, and Remind app. Paraprofessionals, school counselors, school social workers, and school aides are continuing to do outreach and helping with outreach, different meetings to identify at-risk students. Essentially, we utilize any [inaudible] towards a connection with the students to provide outreach and support. So what do we need for September? We need all hands on deck. We need our full staff. We also need protocols to ensure that every person in the school building is safe and stays

healthy, and flexibility in programming for those teachers who have children or elderly parents, or who are immunocompromised. It also would be beneficial for teachers to have professional development around areas of technology and individuals within school buildings who are trained to solve tech-related issues. We need all-hands-on-deck.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You may continue.

MICHAEL MULGREW: John, were you done?

JOHN CASTALDO: Oh, I'm done, yes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, OK. Boy, you got it right down on the two-minute there, thank you very much, and, ah, as I said before, you're a hero to change over from classroom teaching to remote learning. Ah, I was teacher for 25 years. I don't know if I could have done it. Um, as a matter of fact, I don't even know how to create a Google doc, so, ah, you all are heroes. Ah, Mr. Mulgrew?

JOHN CASTALDO: Thank you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Ah, Chair Dromm? Chair Dromm, I just want, I want to thank, ah, Ms. Brown and Mr. Castaldo for their willingness to take time

today to be here even outside of the classroom to advocate for the teachers and children of New York City. This is them, again, going above and beyond to talk about the needs of the families that they serve, the children that they serve, their colleagues, their school communities. I mean, I have the chills, honestly, saying it right now, because in the last, ah, three weeks I have done a Zoom conference with every PTA in my district, ah, of every elementary school and what I have heard over and over again from now thousands of parents is just how grateful they are for the teachers and the principals and parent coordinators and assistant principals for continuing to work so hard. So I really, really want to thank you both so much for what you're doing for the children of our city and representing so many other teachers today who can't be here. OK, I'm sorry. I turn it back over to, to, ah, President Mulgrew.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you, everyone, and thank you, um, thank you Corey. Thank you to the chairs, ah, Danny, to Vanessa, ah, to Mark. Ah, thank you for all that you've done. Look, you just heard from two phenomenonal teachers, but this is a

story being told across our city, ah, the heroic work, ah, a work force that was not trained to do any of this work but we figured it out. There was no federal support. There was no state support. There was no city support. We figured it out. We made it happen on behalf of the children because that's what we know and what was needed and we are, we do this by working, for everybody in the school community. The principals, the teachers, the parents have all worked together to make these things happen. But now we're facing an unprecedented challenges, and that's a word we keep saying every other week, we have another unprecedented challenge. And this budget clearly is one. I am here to tell that we are happy that the UFT, the teachers of New York City, were the first ones over a month ago to start a petition with parents and teachers, talking about we need to have a safe school opening and the funding that we're, that's going to be required. And now we are launching across the entire United States that same coalition with parents, teachers, advocates, all working with together, red states and blue states, to say we need this federal package. Without this federal package we know that that the children will

be greatly harmed. They've already got harmed this year, the social emotional damage is huge, ah, when we have so much more to do. So I am, I am very confident that we will get that done. But I am asking you here, besides the testimony that I'm submitting that all the things that we've been dealt, done in the past and I have always stressed this to all of you. It's always that whatever you give us and support us goes directly to the school. But we need to make sure whatever money is coming from the federal government comes through the state and through the city and actually goes through the school, gets to the school and the children. We cannot afford to have every level of government taking money off the top for whatever they think is best and not getting it to the child.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MICHAEL MULGREW: And I thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, my friend, Mr. President Mulgrew. Um, I just need to get an opinion from you on the cuts that we see coming to the Department of Education. Can you give us an idea of what cuts to the Department of Education, what

type of an effect that will have on our teachers and our, our students in New York City?

MICHAEL MULGREW: At the same time the mayor is saying we need an unprecedented school year, the majority of the cuts go directly to programs and services that actually help children, and, you know, we've had this frustration for years. Ah, we know that not including busing or food that the Department of Ed is spending 6 billion dollars on central, um, on their central offices and we think that's absurd. Ah, and it's getting even more absurd every year that we go along. Ah, but the cuts that they have announced at this point in time are directly aimed at the schools and services that are directly for children. So from mental health services to specific programs to, you know, children, ah, the summer works program, all of this stuff is directly being aimed at the school communities. They might have done this for political reasons, but whatever it is, it says that you can't say at one moment that we're doing, you know, [inaudible] an unprecedented school next year and then at the same time announce cuts of that nature. And we all know that, ah, there's, when it comes a cuts, ah, a fight we've been having for quite

some time, Danny, as you know, is, ah, that behemoth known as DOE central, ah, never seems to, ah, look at itself.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you, President Mulgrew. Of course I could talk to you for hours about, ah, education issues, but we have 366 people.

MICHAEL MULGREW: I heard. You got a big lesson plan today, my friend.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [laughs]

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Excuse me, I apologize, I'll be very quick.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: I just want to be a little specific and it's so helpful to have Michael and Mark here and, and the teachers and members here. So, Michael, the, the proposed cuts that we saw in the executive budget, ah, significant cut to fair student funding.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Ah, which will impact so many schools.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Staff, personnel, yep.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Exactly. Ah, and, ah, Chair Dromm and Chair Treyger have been working, you know, literally every single day trying to identify other cuts, ones that you mentioned, of things that you could cut in DOE that do not affect the classroom, that do not affect children, that do not affect teachers and instruction and the ability for kids to get what they need during this really difficult time. Um, I just would love it if, ah, of course, we could continue to work together, as we always do on having you, ah, help us identify things at DOE central with the outside consulting contracts, ah, ah, other things that we can actually propose to cut, um, that are not going to affect the classroom. So any suggestions that you all have, we look forward to continue to hear those throughout these process.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Ah, well, I appreciate that offer. And it's just, um, when we had to switch to remote learning the schools looked towards, towards each other. Thank God you supported teacher centers last year, because without teacher centers, ah, being able to do so much of this work and connecting schools with, the schools that were doing, ah, had some technology backgrounds, but schools that

didn't and making all that work, nobody looked to the Department of Ed.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Um-hmm.

MICHAEL MULGREW: And that's what tells you the most. Nobody looked to the Department of Ed. All the schools looked to each other. And that's how it got done. So I think that they need to really do some serious reflecting to use, ah, an educational term, reflecting, about what they're doing.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Michael. And, again, we're thinking about all of, ah, teachers and principals and assistant principals that we've lost. And I would like to just take a moment and have a moment of silence for them.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Ah, for everyone who works at the Department of Education that we've lost over the last two-and-a-half months. [moment of silence] Thank you, Michael. I hope your mother stays safe. Thank you very much.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, we'd like to go now to our next panel, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll first hear from Mr. Cannazzaro.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry.

MARK CANNAZZARO: Thank you very much, and, again, I understand you want to get this moving along. [laughter]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But we love you Mark, don't worry.

MARK CANNAZZARO: No, I understand. Good afternoon, and, and you know, it was really refreshing to hear from Michael and, and I'll be able to make my comments short because the CSA is starting to echo, um, many of those comments. But to, ah, Chairman Danny Dromm and, and Corey, thank you so much for those kinds and thank you for being here also, and to Vanessa and of course Mark Treyger, we support, we appreciate all your support and the time you're to taking to do this, and I certainly hope that everyone, um, I just mentioned as well, all on this call are, are safe and their families are safe at this, ah, incredibly uncertain time. Um, the CSA certainly recognizes the, the tremendous, um, economic crisis that this city and that this nation is in and, and we also are working, um, throughout

the state and the nation, ah, with our national organization and our state organization to try to push for the stimulus dollars that we need in order to keep this city and not just the Department of Education, but the entire city, afloat. But, um, what Michael said is so critical that, that we're pretty confident that these dollars will be coming, but we just need to make sure that they get through all of the channels and get directly to the classrooms. You know, in, in, for the last several years we have been pushing hard on this fair student funding piece, um, because that is the aid that goes directly to the classrooms, and we are currently, by the city's own math, 700 million dollars in deficit for fair student funding. Yet each year prior to this year education funding has increased and programs have been put in place, but a large percentage of schools were still directly underfunded for their basic needs. But now we, here we come into this, um, this, this real economic crisis that everyone understands is a real crisis, and we're...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARK CANNAZZARO: ...talking about additional cuts and additional cuts to fair student

funding, the aid that goes directly to school. We simply can't sustain it, and, and to, um, Speaker Johnson's point, we're happy to work with you to identify other areas where we think, um, dollars could be saved. But let's understand that less than one-third of the city's budget actually goes directly to schools, so wherever we find the, the cuts that are necessary, if in fact they do become as necessary as we, we fear, we need to look at the other two-thirds and, and find the cuts, um, that are needed. We also have a tremendous professional development program that has been critical, critical, critical at this time. We've gone completely to remote PD and our attendance is greater than ever, which is telling us that there is a real need out there. And, in addition to that, we're expecting, before this crisis we were expecting a tremendous turnover in school leaders in the next 18 months. Due to this crisis we're expecting it to even be a little greater than, than we were, than we thought. So we need to develop the next, um, next group of school leaders and we're doing a terrific job thus far, but we need to expand that. So with all of the things that are coming down, we need to, we need to keep the money focused

where it does the most good for children, and that's in the schools, developing teachers, developing school leaders, and, and helping children to, ah, come through this not only academically, but socially and emotionally as well. So thank you all for all you're doing and, and thank you, and I do also have to speak to our partnership with the UST during this crisis, has been one of the major reasons that we're doing as well as we can. So, thank you, Michael, and to the UST and thank you to all of you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Mark. I want to, again, thank you and just give you a, a flavor of, you may know this already, what so many of your members in my district are doing. I've been doing Zoom calls every week that are lead by, ah, the principals. I did one two days ago with Kelly Shannon, the principal of PS-40 in Greenwich Village, and did one the week before at PS-33 with Cindy Wang, ah, one of your principals. Ah, I did one last week with Bob Bender, the principal, ah, you know, in Chelsea.

MARK CANNAZZARO: Yes, yeah.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: So they have continued to keep their school communities together and the

parents were sort of just thanking the principals so much for their consistent communication. A lot of the parents were not happy with DOE, really angry with the communication that has come out of DOE, but thanking the principals and assistant principals and teachers for their work. So I want to thank you, Mark, and again, give you our condolences for the members that you've lost.

MARK CANNAZZARO: Yes, thank you, and thank you for that moment of silence. I think that was important and we appreciate that.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, and I just want to echo those sentiments and say thank you as well. Principals really set the tone in schools and what I have seen happen here in my district is that the principals have really stepped up. They've, ah, remained motivational. They have provided excellent leadership. They have transitioned to, ah, the remote learning. Ah, they're on Twitter. They're making announcements. They're holding PTA meetings. It's just amazing to see, ah, what all of our, ah, our schools are doing, and I thank you very, very much, especially having been a former CSA member. Thank you, Mark.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from the next panel, which will be Donald Nesbitt, Ralph Palagino, Marlena Geeha, and Ron Barber.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Nesbitt?

DONALD NESBITT: Ah, good afternoon. And thank you, ah, Councilman Dromm and Councilwoman Gibson, um, and thank you to Corey, to Speaker Corey Johnson and the members of the City Council. So I'll start out by saying, um, school crossing guards, who make $20,000 a year are quite often the first line of defense to improve safety. They take care of students, they take care of adults and they take care of everyone. Safety is paramount and that is evident in the job that, and the work that they're doing at this time. School crossing guards are not often paid for snow days and whenever schools are closed, often losing compensation when everyone in the school community is compensated. Local 372 asks respectfully that this changes and we request at this time for school crossing guards that hazard pay is a must. School lunch employees on a normal day, children eat food in order to concentrate and learn in the classroom, which school lunch employees

regularly serve 900,000 meals a day. School lunch employees work hard every day, both in good and bad times, and now as essential workers they are serving 500,000 meals a day, even during this pandemic, amounting to close to 15 million meals served to families during this time. These demands are not easy. They follow strict standards. They are often spread thin with breakfast in the classroom and preparing for, for lunch. We as Local 372 are in full agreement with all of these programs and feeding children and their families. We request that when new programs are implemented they consider staffing. Quite often staffing members are not considered when they're in the thinking stages. Also, adequate AC and cooling systems need to be installed now for these lunchroom works. And, lastly, hazard pay is a must for them. Our nonessential staff, the parent coordinators, the [inaudible], school aides, family workers, [inaudible]...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You may continue.

DONALD NESBITT: All of these, all of these titles at this time whereas they are named nonessential, are performing essential services. Our

parent coordinators, our school aides, family workers that call on families and taking the brunts of what communities are feeling at this time. They are assistant teachers and their tremendous work and what they're doing, but how do you ask children to log into remote learning when we make a phone call we find out that families have lost and children have lost a brother or sister, mother, or father? [inaudible] members are taking these stories while continuing to take care of their own families and make sure that their own children and grandchildren are receiving their educational needs. Parent coordinators need job security now. Our staffers are still conducting presentation to prevent children from using drugs and controlled substances during this COVID-19 pandemic. Yet they face dangerous levels as there are only 270 staffers citywide, serving 1.1 million children. That is one for every 5000 children. We ask that these numbers increase, especially COVID-19 where they will be needed even more and more. We have many...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: May I ask you to wrap up?

DONALD NESBITT: OK. Ah, we are, we have members who are homeless during this time. Ah, we have those who have lost pay at the DOE. And, um, we ask that that change. Um, school support staff are critical to a functioning school system. They create space every day where teachers can teach and students can learn. Local 372 workers will provide these services as essential or nonessential to the public school system. We, we thank the City Council, Speaker Corey Johnson, and the individual members, um, Councilman Dromm, Vanessa Gibson, Councilwoman. Ah, we recognize that there are tough decisions as far as resources at this time, but we thank you for always taking on worthy issues, um, and servicing our members and allocating adequate, um, adequate funds for our members. We ask that this continues even though hard decisions have to be made, ah, for these workers whether essential or nonessential. On behalf of the 24,000 members of Local 372 and under the leadership of Sean D. Francois I, ah, we thank you for the opportunity the have testimony before you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Mr. Nesbitt. And, um, I have to say, you know, you know, workers, the members of your union have been

exemplary. I, ah, went out and looked at the grab and go lunches. They got a whole system going. They're there every single day. They're really on the ground and they're really front-line workers, as are the other members of the union, the school crossing guards, they're out there. They're actually helping form the lines in front the schools, you know. They're going above and beyond, ah, their duties. So I am most grateful. I have seen what's happening and, ah, please convey our gratitude to your members as well.

DONALD NESBITT: Yeah, thank you so much for that, Councilman.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Paladino?

RALPH PALADINO: Thank you and good afternoon. Ah, you will be receiving our lengthier Local 1549 written testimony later today. Um, so I'll just get right to it. So you want to cut fat from the city budget. Well, we've said it before. First, civilianize the NYPD. Why are 500 uniform officers still sitting at desks doing the work that police administrative aides, wasting 30 million dollars a year, do. Meanwhile, crime has been

2 spiking and the NYPD wants to continue to downsize
3 the PAA title. Two, staffing. 9/11 staffing, first
4 responders. 9/11 is fully staffed. Not really. 400
5 additional police officers have been added to perform
6 9/11 duty during this crisis, [inaudible] staffing.
7 And that is without the texting that starts in June.
8 Three, uphold civil service. The city, DCAS, and
9 especially ACS and HRA are subverting civil service
10 and wasting millions of dollars by replacing civil
11 service clerical titles with higher-paid, non-
12 competitive, and managerial titles, doing the same
13 work. Three, or four, I'm sorry, eligibility
14 specialists. HRA and the city have created 400
15 positions of eligibility specialists who determine
16 eligibility for [inaudible], SNAP, and Medicaid. We
17 opposed this last year. Now in the SNAP program the
18 [inaudible] are working from 7 in the morning to 8:30
19 at night and the city has to move higher-paid case
20 workers, 200 of them, and Metro Plus HMO workers to
21 meet that demand. As far as furloughs and layoffs
22 being on the table, and hopefully they will be off
23 the table, those jobs and services will be lost and
24 felt the most by the communities of color in this
25 city.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

RALPH PALADINO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, and Mr. Paladino, we will follow up with you. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Marlena Geeha.

MARLENA GEEHA: Hi, good afternoon, my name is Marlena Geeha. And I am part of DC37 Local 983. I'm a PEP officer, ah, for 20 years and I'm also a union rep. I represent the city's seasonal aides, the PEP offices, rangers, APSW maintenance workers. Um, I want to say that we're currently pleading with you to continue to employ the Parks Department employees who are designated for the parks. They already know the patrons in the parks and are also part of this great city and community. Our CSAs are one of the lowest-paid workers in the city, but are also the backbone of keeping everyone able to enjoy the Parks Department, ah, and the beaches and the pools. Um, we would like to see them working. We want to keep all our Parks Department employees employed. Our PEP officers and rangers are necessary to keep everyone safe in the, in the park, and the city depends on them, as well as the needs of

the maintenance workers, now more than ever. There are currently 44 play fair rangers at risk of losing their jobs and 80 PEP officers at risk, um, at losing their jobs July 1. So we're asking that these lines be baselined. Um, we understand that the city wants to add ambassadors, ah, to the Parks Department, um, and have them patrolling the parks, and it sounds like a good idea. But we're seeing problems already within the parks. We have some of the ambassadors giving incorrect information and also we had an incident where a member of the public needed an ambulance and the ambassadors didn't actually know where they were. So we're asking that you keep the Parks Department employees, the ones who have been doing the job all along, to keep them working. Um, and I want to thank...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARLENA GEEHA: ...[inaudible] employees. Um, we also ask that the Parks Department employees be given, um, the hero money, and please keep our Parks Department employees working. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you very much. Let's go to our next, um, testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Barber?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

RON BARBER: Yeah. Thank you, ah, good afternoon, Chairman Daniel Dromm, ah, Speaker Corey Johnson, and fellow committee members. I first want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify on behalf of all the union members of the Brooklyn Public, New York Public, and Queens Public Library. We are united in our request, ah, that the City Council save our libraries. Ah, let me begin by saying thank you for last year's budget. Um, the City Council and the men who provided the city's library system with an exceptional budget, these funds allowed the library system to continue all excellent library services, ah, to your constituents, ah, and that they expected from us, ah, and to begin to meet the system's expanded needs. Um, so thus far I want to say that we were hit with, ah, a virus that created anxiety and confusion in our people. A few people in this city understood what would befall us and no one could fully appreciate the impact this virus will have. Now, following the major, the mayor's lead and the immense relief for our library staff, the library systems' physical locations shut down. Now, we are able to, ah, we were able to cut

or [inaudible] and be able to assess the physical and mental health of our staff. We also began strategizing and hope to provide library services virtually. Immediately after that we began moving all our programs online, expanding our digital material and increasing Wi-Fi accessibility. Now, in our ninth week of the shutdown, library staff have gotten into a groove of keeping all the libraries operating and meeting our online demands. The four unions are working with the three library systems to ensure our patrons get as many...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

RON BARBER: ...[inaudible] as we can safely provide, maintaining our physical sense of community with our patrons. As the city reopens, ah, the libraries will be there to and ready to help the city and our fellow New Yorkers on the road to recovery. We will be a stabilizing force in every neighborhood. We know that we are challenging times but it is our hope that the financial support we need from the City Council and the mayor so that we can be effective partners in the city of recovery. We want to dedicate this testimony to the members of Local 274, 1321, 1482, and 1930 who have lost family

members, friends, loved ones, and that they made the ultimate sacrifice to this disease. Submitted by yours truly, Ronaldo Barber, president, Local 1482, Bob Colon, president, New York Public Local Elective 30, John Heisloft, Queens Public Library, Local 1321, and Leonard Cole, president, Local 374, quasi-public employee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Mr. Barber. I know that Council Member Van Bramer has a question.

RON BARBER: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Am I muted?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You're good.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Ah, so, first of all, thank you very much. I'm, um, calling from a car because we're distributing mass to our district. Um, but I want to just say, ah, thank you to, ah, Ron, representing all library, ah, employees, and all of the hard-working men and women of DC37, um, and even though our libraries are physically not open right now, ah, I know that they're still providing incredible services and, ah, when we are ready to reopen, ah, our city there is no reopening without our public libraries being fully funded and all of

our staff being able to go back to work. So, ah, I know that, ah, the speaker and the chair, ah, have been big supporters of our public libraries and I know the council has always fought for them. So I just wanted to, ah, weigh in again and say thank you so much to all the hard-working library employees, DC37 members, and just know, ah, that myself and others, ah, we're gonna go to battle on behalf of our public libraries and in particular the hard-working men and women of DC37. So thank you, and thank you, Chair Dromm, for allowing me the opportunity to say a few words.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Absolutely.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair Dromm, and thank you, Council Member Van Bramer. If we, Chair Dromm, if we could have a moment of silence for all of the DC37 workers that we've lost, which is well over 100, I was speaking to Henry Garito the other day. If we could take a moment of silence to think of all these wonderful workers who were such an important part of city that we've lost. [moment of silence] Thank you. And I want to thank Ron Barber, of course, for testifying. I want to thank Ralph for testifying. I want to thank, of course, the folks

who are representing our Parks workers, and I want to just, ah, give a shout-out to Council Member Van Bramer, who has been chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs for the last 11 years and in every conversation talks about libraries, investing in them, cultural institutions. We, ah, made a historic investment last year in our libraries, one of the biggest investments ever made over the last many decades, and that was a partnership between, ah, Council Member, ah, Dromm, Council Member Van Bramer, myself, and the entire council in fighting for that. So we're gonna continue to look out for libraries because they're egalitarian, they serve the communities that need it. They help immigrants and children and seniors, and we want to make sure that the workers are taken care of, but also these communities are served. So I'm really grateful in the middle of, ah, Council Member Van Bramer delivering mass in his district. It doesn't surprise me that he signed on to talk about libraries in this important budget hearing. So thank you, ah, Council Member Van Bramer. Ah, thank you, ah, Mr. Barber. And I turn it back to you, Chair Dromm. Danny, you're muted.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, I know [laughs]. Thank you very much, ah, Speaker. Let's go to our next witness please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which has, ah, 11 members. We will hear from Gwen Carr, Sara Hayes, Michael Cohen, Donay Edmond, Kelly Grace Price, Julyan Kang, Lendon Arnold, Leo Ferguson, Beverly Tillary, Yafa Diaz, and Lauren Miller. Ms. Carr, you can begin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: And time starts now.

GWEN CARR: Sorry, I was on mute. Um, my name is Yilsan Meme. I'm with the Justice Committee. I'm gonna read on Gwen's behalf. My name is Gwen Carr and I'm the mother of Eric Garner, who was killed by the NYPD in 2014. I'm here today because I know firsthand that New York City doesn't have a fair budget and that more money goes to policing black communities like mine than goes to making sure there are employment opportunities, affordable housing, youth programs, or quality public health.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'm so sorry to interrupt. It appears that we've lost the live stream. If you don't mind pausing for a moment, then

we'll restart your time once we fix the technical difficulty. Thank you.

GWEN CARR: OK.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your patience. You may begin again.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: And time starts now.

GWEN CARR: Ah, this is Yilsan Meme. I'm reading on behalf of Gwen Carr. My name is Gwen Carr. I am the mother of Eric Garner, who was killed by the NYPD in 2014. I'm here today because I know firsthand...

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your patience...

GWEN CARR: ...that New York City doesn't have a fair budget....

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin again.

GWEN CARR: ...and that more money goes to policing black communities...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

GWEN CARR: ...like mine than goes to making sure there are employment opportunities, affordable housing (double voice, repeating same statement) programs, or college. The New York City, ah, the 2021 budget that Mayor de Blasio has proposed

is unacceptable. It must be reworked to prioritize recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, to strengthen social services, and support [inaudible]. It makes no sense for the, ah, the New York City [inaudible] and to continue to pay the salaries of officers who [inaudible]. Why would we bring more police, why would we bring in more police and we can't hire school guidance counselors, nurses, and social workers for our youth? And this is especially horrible and violent when you look at the way the NYPD has been abusing our communities through social distancing [inaudible]. During the half decade [inaudible] half a million dollars. He also cost the city tens of thousands of dollars at least in lost [inaudible]. For council members who have marched with me and who have said Eric's name, I [inaudible] fight for a budget that prioritizes our communities [inaudible]. I need you to help honor Eric's memory by fighting to cut the NYPD's huge, almost 6 billion dollar budget. I'm calling on council members to stand with me and other families and make it clear they worked against a budget that does not include a NYPD hiring freeze and make other big cuts so that our social safety net can be saved and to help our

1 communities recover from the pandemic. These cuts
2 should reflect a commitment to police accountability
3 and removal...
4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.
5 GWEN CARR: ...of [inaudible] and other
6 [inaudible] and a removal of police from social
7 services. Thank you.
8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [inaudible]
9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Hayes?
10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.
11 SARA HAYES: Thank you. Um, I'm grateful
12 to the New York City Council for the opportunity to
13 testify today. This afternoon I'll be highlighting
14 issues of economic empowerment for survivors of
15 domestic violence. As a service provider at the
16 Economic Empowerment Program [inaudible] for families
17 I'm very familiar with the economic challenges
18 survivors face not just at home, but in all aspects
19 of their lives, especially the workplace. Now with
20 the added challenge of the slowdown of the economy
21 related to COVID-19, service providers in the
22 economic empowerment space find themselves faced with
23 a predicament of where service efforts are best
24 directed. Many vulnerable individual survivors
25

[inaudible] especially minimum wage employment and they now find themselves out of work and further impoverished as a result of COVID-19. It will take time for the economy and the job market to return to its robust pre-pandemic status. However, represented with an opportunity to make a lasting impact on their, um, ultimate self-sufficiency, um, through career track skills-based training. Ah, my purpose is to give survivors the skills and experience they need to meet the [inaudible] job market, um, on its own [inaudible] public assistance for good. Our program is inherently intensive training, because career training can't be [inaudible] and we make sure that what we're offering as a service is in lock stop with what the economy has demanded, um, on the living wage side. Our program, given the fact that it's gonna take months for the economy to also, um, recover, um, and our program does take a significant amount of time [inaudible] this is also [inaudible] time that we have to, um, get, um, on, our clients back on their feet, out of shelter, and into [inaudible] jobs.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

SARA HAYES: Um, thank you. Um, so COVID-19 has disrupted lives of millions, ah, none more so than the most vulnerable of us, survivors of DV. Um, and I ask the New York City Council to consider to continue to increase funding in this regard and [inaudible], um, so needy members of our community.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll move on to Donay Edmonds.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DONAY EDMOND: Hi, good afternoon everyone and thank you for, um, hearing this testimony. My name is Donay Edmond and I'm the community student coordinate at the Center for Antiviolence Education. Our mission is to [inaudible] program and active bystander intervention training. I'm also here to testify on behalf of the New York City Against Hate Coalition, which is [inaudible] of our funding through the Hate Violence Financial Initiatives. Since COVID-19 [inaudible] working with New York City Against Hate Coalition has facilitated 26 [inaudible] trainings [inaudible] 725 workers against [inaudible] especially against Asian communities, Asian Pacific

Islanders, and Jewish communities. Our trainings focus on community solutions, working [inaudible] bias and scapegoating online, in public media narratives, in public spaces, and with 122 New Yorkers against [inaudible] and we recognize that painful cuts will have to be made, but now more than ever we need to prioritize the most effective programs [inaudible] the residents that have been most impacted and vulnerable. I think fear and scarcity are among the most potent underlying causes of hate violence, especially the COVID-19-related [inaudible] that have impacted Asian and Jewish communities [inaudible] and to cut funding for social and human services, education, youth employment [inaudible] exacerbate fear, tension. Fear and economic are among the [inaudible] hardest hit in the [inaudible] to ensure that New York City's Jewish, Arab, Muslim, LGBTQ, and black and brown New Yorkers have access to culturally responsive [inaudible] services during and after this pandemic. Thank you for your [inaudible]...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

DONAY EDMOND: ...during this tumultuous time and continue to work to end hate violence in New York City. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. Next.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Michael Cohen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MICHAEL COHEN: Thank you, Chairman Dromm, ah, and Speaker Johnson, members of the committee. Um, thank you for the opportunity of letting the Simon Wiesenthal Center to present today. Thank you for all the incredible work that all of you are doing during these unprecedented times. My name is Michael Cohen and I am here today representing the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a leading global human rights organization [inaudible] anti-Semitism, ah, racism, standing up for human dignity for all. [inaudible] in the New York area [inaudible] an issue that has increasingly [inaudible] and targeting our children. I think social media is saturated with hate [inaudible] activities. Since the COVID-19 [inaudible] Jewish and Asian Americans, especially the Chinese Americans [inaudible] our city's children are especially vulnerable as they are online

virtually every week [inaudible]. Just over [inaudible] children forcibly removed their face mask while yelling that the Jews are spreading the virus. At the same time in the Bronx four teenage girls were assaulted by an Asian man, by a, by a, that assaulted an Asian passerby with their umbrellas [inaudible]. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others, and this case, and the case where [inaudible] online gaming platform [inaudible] need to protect our children from this scourge and the need to [inaudible] online haters [inaudible]. Part of our strategy has been to [inaudible] social media giants [inaudible] hate and bullying we are seeing today. At three years now the Simon Wiesenthal Center [inaudible] junior high schools and high schools around the country [inaudible]...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

MICHAEL COHEN: ...[inaudible] looking to the council for critical support to help us bring such programming online and in classrooms when they reopen and in New York City public schools [inaudible] middle schools and high schools. I just want to thank once again the committee for prioritizing the issue of hate speech and bullying

and to continuing doing a leadership role in creating new [inaudible] strategies to help [inaudible]. The Simon Wiesenthal Center will continue to work you [inaudible] difficult [inaudible]. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kelly Grace Price.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

KELLY GRACE PRICE: Hi, good afternoon, um, I'm just emailing my testimony and I'm going to stay off camera if you don't mind. I've too many Zooms. But thank you for allowing me to present my testimony. It's 17 pages, so I'll just quickly go over the first five points. Um, I'm Kelly Grace Price from the Close Rosie's Organization. I'm advocating to end sexual violence on Riker's Island [inaudible] on walked on bare foot from Riker's Island in 2011 after being unlawfully incarcerated there as a survivor of sexual violence. I'm here to ask the Finance Committee today and Chair Dromm and Cochair Gibson to carefully consider how this year's budget [inaudible] so far has not presented a comprehensive legislative or fiscal response to me [inaudible]. I suggest find [inaudible] move this

city to at least responding to the movement. How this, number one, sexual violence data, where is the data currently available? Is it working? Is it provided? Are we complying to federal laws that require sexual violence reporting, data reporting? Well, the short answer is that we're not, ah, the specific statutes are the justice system's improvement act of 1979...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think we lost you, Grace.

KELLY GRACE PRICE: ...[inaudible] and US public law [inaudible]. I'm sorry?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You're going in and out, Grace.

KELLY GRACE PRICE: OK, I apologize. I'm so sorry. Um, I'll just email my testimony in, but I would like to [inaudible] the council to carefully consider it. We really, ah, we need to respond to the Me Too movement and we need to create within the Women's Caucus a few positions that won't cost more than half a million dollars that will allow us to create a block chain data process, um, um, method and, and unit, and will also give us a couple policy analysts that will allow to slowly start pulling

responsibilities away from the NYPD SVU. Thank you so much. And Chair Dromm, thank you so much for these last three days. God bless your efforts. I don't know how you're still on camera. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. All right. Ah, Grace, thank you. Let's go to our next person please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Juyung Kang.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JUYUNG KANG: Hello. Ah, my name is Antonine Pierre and I'm the deputy director of the Brooklyn Movement Center. I am speaking today on behalf of Communities United for Police Reform, taking the place of Juyung Kang. So I want to thank Finance Committee Danny Dromm, Finance Committee members, um, other council members who are on and the speaker. So we have separate written testimony, so I'm just gonna focus my two minutes on a few points, and the deep inequalities that existed in our city before COVID-19 have been starkly revealed and exacerbated by the pandemic. The mayor's proposed FY21 budget is unacceptable. It would be devastating to communities of color and all New Yorkers. We are calling on the City Council to reject their immoral

priorities laid out in the executive budget and to pass a budget that will truly ensure an equitable recovery for black, Latinx, and other communities of color most devastated by all impacts of the pandemic. As you know, the executive budget includes many cuts to social services. However, the NYPD budget has been left essentially untouched with less than half of 1% of cuts proposed. We are calling on you to ensure that the FY21 budget makes significant cuts to the NYPD's bloated, almost 6 billion dollar budget. These cuts should include a hiring freeze on the NYPD, including school safety officers, the cancellation of cadet classes, to stop the expansion of the NYPD into social service delivery, and cuts to protect New Yorkers from, ah, abusive policing as well as cuts to nonessential items in the NYPD budget. Budgets are road maps to a government's priorities and morals. We need an FY21 budget that puts major financial resources into our public health infrastructure, social safety net, and programs that will enable our communities to not only survive through and after the pandemic. The only way to do this...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JUYANG KANG: ...requires the council to be willing to reduce the NYPD's massive, nontransparent, and unaccountable budget as a part of a overall budget justice strategy. So, in closing, please feel free to reach out to [inaudible] Movement Center, Communities United for Police Reform, and member groups, who would love to partner with council members to fight for a budget our communities deserve, and use the hashtag #nycbudgetjustice.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for your testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [inaudible].

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

YILSOM WEEM: Hello? Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: We can hear you.

YILSOM WEEM: OK, great, sorry. I'm not seeing myself, so. Hi, um, this is Yilson Weem again. Um, Lendon had to jump off. But we're both from the Justice Committee. Should I start now?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes.

YILSOM WEEM: OK. Um, earlier this week, so Justice Committee is a grassroots organization that works with families who have lost loved ones to the police. We're also a member of CPR. Earlier

this week, um, families who have lost loved ones to the police in our membership did a virtual presser that, um, uplifted the same demands that Antonine just laid out, ah, a budget that includes an NYPD hiring freeze, cancellation of the new cadet class, removal of the NYPD from social service roles like mental health response, youth initiatives, school safety, and homeless services, and the swift removal of officers who kill and brutalize with the funding of the NYPD for their salaries. Um, as the Justice Committee we're here to uplift these demands to you today. Particularly want to highlight that the NYPD spends millions of dollars on its involvement in mental health response. At the same time our communities lack culturally competent community-based preventative and post-crisis care. Cases like Mohamed Bok, Waspy Traywick, Sayed Basil, and many, many others are, ah, on the list of examples of why the NYPD should not be involved in the [inaudible] response. It is counterproductive, illogical, costly, and dangerous. Removing the NYPD from mental health response [inaudible] city to devote funds, um, to the kinds of services that will actually support the health of our communities. Additionally, we want

to highlight that the NYPD spends millions of dollars every year to [inaudible] on the payroll. Ah, Gwen's testimony speaks to this. We rant the numbers on just 10 cases with killings whose families we work with. Um, the, ah, city spent 13.7 million to keep these officers involved in these killings on the payroll during de Blasio's tenure. And that's just 10 cases. So if you think about the widespread lack of accountability, how often officers who really should not be on the force, continue to collect their salaries. Um, that figure has got to be astronomical. Um, I just want to end by saying that we're in a pivotal moment. The City Council has an opportunity to shift [inaudible].

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

YILSOM WEEM: Um, and we're calling on you to stand with the families and stand with workers. Do not pass a budget unless it includes an NYPD hiring freeze and the other cuts that I mentioned.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Leo Ferguson.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: TIME STARTS NOW.

LEO FERGUSON: Good afternoon, Chair Dromm and other council members. My name is Leo Ferguson and I am on staff at Jews for Racial and Economic Justice. I am testifying on behalf of the NYC Against Hate Coalition, which is seeking a restoration and expansion of funding for the Hate Violence Prevention Initiative. The Hate Violence Prevention Initiative, the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes at MOCJ, and the NYC Against Hate Coalition were created last year and funded by this council in response to rapidly rising hate violence in New York City. Unfortunately, the city has over-emphasized the NYPD hate crimes task force and prosecutions, which is a response to symptoms, not underlying causes, and does not educate, heal, or unite communities. The Hate Violence Prevention Initiative is a step in the right direction, a better direction. It empowers directly impacted New Yorkers with trusted community-based organizations innovating [inaudible] effect strategies. We strongly support preserving and expanding the initiative and fully funding the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes. Given the city's fiscal crisis, we believe it is appropriate and responsible to reduce the budget of

the NYPD in order to fund HVPI and OPHC. Even as crime rates plummet, New York City is spending more on policing than on health, homeless services, youth development, and work force development combined. That simply does not make sense during a humanitarian public health disaster. Overinvestment in policing and underinvestment in public health, housing, and communities will only increase the painful inequities that the COVID-19 crisis has laid bare, inequities that fuel intercommunal tensions and drive hate violence. We need a fair budget that protects our frontline and essential workers, begins to address the horrifying racial inequities for black and brown people dying of COVID at twice the rate of other New Yorkers, that gets homeless people into hotels, and supports our kids over the summer and our teachers in the fall. The mayor's budget literally takes services away from the most vulnerable New Yorkers to fund the largest police force in the US. Cutting the NYPD budget to fund community-based, violence prevention, and other vital...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

LEO FERGUSON: ...children [inaudible] and services is the right choice. Um, we are an

investment in the long-term safety and health of our communities and we ask that the council fully fund HVPI and NYC Against Hate. Thank you, chair and members for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Beverly Tillery.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

BEVERLY TILLERY: Good afternoon Chairs Dromm, Menchaca, and Gibson, and Speaker Johnson. My name is Beverly Tillery and I am executive director of the New York City Antiviolence Project, or AVP. We appreciate the council's past support of our work, um, with LGBTQ and HIV-infected survivors of violence. During times of crisis like this one we know that intimate partner violence and other forms of violence, discrimination, and economic instability increase. In these times AVP's work is more important than ever. We are the only LGBTQ-specific victim service agency in New York City. We operate a [inaudible] 24/7 hour hotline and provide [inaudible] services, counseling, community organizing, and advocacy to our community. We are working with community members who were before COVID among the most marginalized and vulnerable in the city and who

since COVID have become even more so. Violence against LGBTQ New Yorkers has not ended during COVID. We've seen two trans women, um, from New York City murdered in Puerto Rico. A gay man was recently murdered in what is likely an intimate partner violence homicide. Our clients and community members are sheltered in place with people causing them harm, and not just for LGBTQ people, that's not just intimate partner violence, but it's also hate violence that people are experiencing in their homes right now while quarantined. AVP is seeking the restoration in funding to support those most vulnerable in our community. Um, we're seeking funding around general operations, [inaudible], hate crimes prevention initiative, the outreach work to connect programs, connect persons involved in the sex trades with supportive services initiative, the initiative for immigrant...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

BEVERLY TILLERY: ...survivors of domestic violence, and legal services for the working poor initiative. We're also seeking funding for new transgender, gender nonconforming, nonbinary immigration legal services initiative. Um, we

understand the challenge that city is facing right now. However, we encourage the city to maintain its discretionary budget and funding, find savings elsewhere, um, as the cuts to City Council, then funding to City Council discretionary funding, um, 'cause those, those cuts will grow inequities in the city and will have a damaging impact on organizations serving LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities of color. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much.

BEVERLY TILLERY: Thanks.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yafa Diaz.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is starting now.

YAFA DIAZ: Hi, thank you, hi. Hi, good afternoon, Chair [inaudible] Vanessa and council members. My name is Yafa Diaz. And I am the lead organizer at the Arab American Association of New York. Ah, AAANY has been working within the Bay Ridge community for over 20 years now and provides invaluable services to empower, defend, and advocate for New York's Arab American community. I am testifying on behalf of the NYC Against Hate

Coalition, which is seeking a restoration of our funding through the Hate Violence Prevention Initiative. We are a grown coalition of nine groups working across identities to make New York safer for our communities through community education, training, and action. I am grateful to be testifying at this hearing at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic makes our work that much more important. Unfortunately, the pandemic has exasperated some of the ways hate violence is perpetrated against many communities. Anti-Asian bias, anti-Arab bias, and anti-Semitism has, ah, increased as people look for scapegoats to blame the pandemic on. With support from the HVPI initiative last year our coalition was able to offer trainings and create and distribute materials for impacted communities. On February 13, 2020, our coalition organized its largest action, a citywide date against hate, which included 24 workshops and other events all across New York City, with hundreds of New Yorkers learning how to protect themselves and their neighbors from hate violence. New York City Against Hate recommends a restoration and expansion of the funding under the Hate Violence Prevention Initiative and that all of the NYC Against

Hate Coalition members are funded. With the council's help, we will work to ensure that NYC's Asian, Jewish, Arab American, Muslim, LGBTQ, and black and brown are protected...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

YAFA DIAZ: ...to negate violence throughout this crisis. Thank you, Chairs, for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Yafa, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren Miller.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

LAUREN MILLER: Greetings. Thank you for the opportunity. I'm the executive director of the Center for Antiviolence Education. We're known as CAE. And we work to prevent gender-, sexual-, and hate-based violence. Every year we work with more than 3000 New Yorkers across the five boroughs. Right now we're incredibly concerned about cuts to City Council discretionary funding. And I urge you to divest from strategies that are developing in our communities. Instead, please invest in community solutions that strengthen communities, in efforts that help us keep each other safe, and efforts that

support the well-being and humanity of people at the margins. This is an equity issue. Cuts will having a damaging impact on the marginalized communities served by my organization's work. These are communities for whom COVID-19 has been that much more dangerous, communities of color, people who are low income, people in relationship and family violence, and youth. These are also communities being scapegoated for the virus. And we continue to see he hate violence against Asian Americans and API communities, as well as Jewish and immigrant communities. The Center for Antiviolence Education relies on discretionary funds to carry out our work and to develop and deliver rapid response programming as needs arise. These are programs that engage diverse groups of New Yorkers and community solutions against violence. When COVID-19 hit CAE built a rapid Upscatter response to the rise of xenophobia and on March 17 we launched our first online Upscatter workshop. We've since delivered over 25 remote workshops for Upscatter for over 700 New Yorkers and this number continues to grow and this work is separate from the prior [inaudible] work. This fall we begin to roll out online harm reduction

and community building workshops to people sheltering in place in family violence situations. Hundreds of people who identify as survivors or, and DV service providers have taken these workshops.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

LAUREN MILLER: We've done the same pivots with our youth work and our teen peer educators are getting to launch their annual antiviolence summit online in June. We all know that [inaudible] communities are magnified and the fatalities disproportionately fall on those at the margins. Let's work towards collective community responsibility and community solutions. This is how we mitigate the violent social implications of the crisis. Please support the Hate Violence Prevention Initiative, Dove, DYCD, MOCJ CSA, and MOCJ PSA. This makes my organization's work possible and the work of the other members of NYC Against Hate Coalition possible. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will call the next panel. Man Yak You, Farah Salon, Tasvia Raman, Sharanya Palay, Joanne Yu, Gida Fisher, and Rashny Ahmed.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MAN YAK YOU: Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name Man Yak and I represent the Academy of Medical and Public Health Services. I'm the executive vice president. Sorry, um, I'm the executive vice president and chief of staff. The Academy of Medical and Public Health Services serves both the Asian and Latino community members in the heart of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, to offer free health and literacy services. COVID-19 has hit our community particularly hard. The Latino community faces one of the highest risks of contracting COVID, while the Asian community is being increasingly targeted through [inaudible] as well as economic instability with closing businesses. Ms. Chen, an undocumented ESL student, initially came to us for help for a rebellious teenager. And we found out that she had thought many times about ending her life. After counseling her, we found her temporary assistance to see a therapist and psychiatrist. As her coverage ended she could no longer afford these visits or the medications, costing $200 per session. This has been aggravated by COVID-19, including fears of going outside, but even accessing hospital

2 services for the fear of getting sick, or for the
3 fear of encountering immigration enforcement. And
4 Asian Americans in particular are entrenched in this
5 [inaudible] narrative of [inaudible] minority men,
6 which often portrays as being economically
7 independent and mentally healthy, healthy, erasing
8 the stories of the thousands of community members
9 that we serve, just like Ms. Chen. We're now working
10 to hire additional mental health therapist who can
11 serve our increasing [inaudible] services and support
12 groups. But the cost to do so is high, at over $50
13 an hour, and we can only offer this part time. We'll
14 also providing them with cash assistance and food
15 assistance. [inaudible] hotline is at capacity every
16 day, connecting people to care, and with the fears of
17 accessing hospital services, not only we need to
18 continue providing additional education to combat
19 myths, but we also need to increase funding for
20 community health [inaudible] service organizations
21 like [inaudible] offer preventative health services
22 that community members, they no longer want to seek
23 [inaudible] hospitals, especially to prevent...
24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.
25

MAN YAK YOU: ...high-risk conditions like hypertension that would otherwise go unnoticed. We also need to expand total health infrastructure by big organizations with HIPAA-compliant technology, ah, across programs managed, ah, clients are receiving, ah, different type of services across different programs and to support the mental health staff that are increasingly, ah, being burdened with additional responsibilities. We are asking for restoration immigrant health and adult literacy initiative funding and a new provision of, um, mental health and [inaudible] literacy funding to address these caps. And we know that COVID-19 has highlighted a lot of [inaudible], um, we hope that we would have your support [inaudible]. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Farah Salon.

FARAH SALON: Hi...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

FARAH SALON: Good afternoon, all. My name is Farah Salon and I'm the community health and well-being coordinator at the Arab American Family Support Center and I want to begin by thanking the

Committee on Finance, Chair Dromm, and entire New York City Council for inviting community-based organizations to comment on this proposed budget for fiscal year 20. Um, I am also honored to testify alongside the 15% and growing campaign on behalf of immigrant and refugee families throughout New York City. At the Arab American Family Support Center, AFSC, we have dedicated ourselves to creating an inclusive haven for immigrants and refugees for over 25 years. Um, we promote well-being, prevent violence, and get families ready to learn, work, and succeed. We serve all who are in need, but with over 25 years of experience we have gained cultural and linguistic competency and responsiveness in serving New York's growing Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities. As a culturally and linguistically competent trauma-informed organization, we've expanded to offer services throughout the five boroughs and have hired additional staff in response to the growing community needs. Our team speaks 22 different languages, which includes Arabic, Bangla, Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Pashto, and Punjab. As a CBO providing essential services to the most marginalized among us, we have remained open

during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We've expanded, ah, expended additional unplanned services, resources, and services to ensure that our staff have the appropriate personal protective equipment and invested in confidential teleconferencing platforms for some of our programs. We are cognizant of the digital divide and low literacy that many of our participants face. Um, transitioning to these multiple platforms including texting, calling, emailing, and using HIPAA-compliant video conferencing tools to meet our clients' growing needs. As a community-based organization providing essential services to the most marginalized among us...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

FARAH SALON: So the need for our services has increased in the past few weeks. Our communities face acute difficulties because of pre-existing housing, including economic instability. We have seen an 40% increase in services provided since late March. In response to the rising DV and child abuse cases, we launched a confidential hotline which we have trained staff to, um, we have trained staff to man and, um, establish certain code words with

clients to make sure that they are safe and to address their, um, concerns that they may be facing.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Farah, can you just wrap up?

FARAH SALON: Yep. Um, so what we just want to do, um, we want to say thank you and, um, ask that the council honor that, you know, many of the communities that we serve are 15% of the, ah, population in New York City and that the, um, budget addresses and reflects that. Thank you very much, and have a wonderful day.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Farah. Let's go to our next, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Tasvia Raman.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

TASVIA RAMAN: I'm Tasvia Raman, a policy coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families. Thank you, Chair Dromm, and the committee members for the opportunity to testify. Since 1986 the ACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children and family advocacy organization, and leads the 15% and Growing campaign, a group of nearly 50 Asian-led and serving organizations working together to ensure that the city's budget ports the most

vulnerable Asian and Pacific American New Yorkers, comprising over 15% of the city, yet the needs of the community are consistently overlooked, misunderstood, and not counted. This is no different now as the number of infections and fatality due to COVID-19 from all APAs remain to be undercounted and misrepresented, endangering the lives of the most vulnerable. 25% of APAs live in poverty, the highest in the city. We also have the highest rate of linguistic isolation at 42%. Yet our organizations receive only 1.5% of the city's social service contract dollars, and last year we only received 1.37% of discretionary dollars. Further cuts can only exacerbate these inequities in this crisis. Our member and partner organizations serving the city's communities of color and Arab American communities are especially impacted by the pandemic on top of threats like public charge. Funding such as the communities of color nonprofit stabilization fund is critical as our organizations are providing a range of services, including checking in on seniors facing language barriers to [inaudible] survivors and victims of gender-based violence with counseling and tools for housing and economics as well as providing

information and support for those who are facing COVID-19-related anti-Asian [inaudible]. It's important more now than ever that the city passes a budget investing in our CBOs doing the work to support the most marginalized New Yorkers. Not only should our government be responsive to the immediate impacts of COVID-19. It should also be proactive in providing safety nets for our communities. We're especially vulnerable to long-term repercussions of this public health crisis. Yet we are facing threats of cuts in state funding, Medicaid, New York City public health...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

TASVIA RAMAN: ...[inaudible] public schools. We hope the city can step up once again to support our communities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right, next please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sharanya Palay.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SHARANYA PALAY: Thank you, thank you [inaudible] Daniel Dromm and the Committee on Finance for helping India Home provide for the South Asian and [inaudible] senior community. My name is

Sharanya Palay. I'm the deputy director at India Home. Um, I know I only have two minutes today, so I invite you take a look at our submitted written testimony for more information. India Home serves a vulnerable population that is oftentimes overlooked and made invisible in the larger conversation and we've seen the exacerbation of this during this pandemic. Um, on top of the health concerns that have hit the older adult population and numerous losses that we have faced in our senior community, our newly homebound South Asian seniors are struggling with food insecurity, financial and housing insecurity, language access, mental illness, and access to benefits, among other issues. India Home has quickly pivoted to address all these needs. We're reaching more seniors now than ever before with direct and essential services. We've been tirelessly working to make sure our community gets accurate information and resources in language. We've prioritized food security and quickly started a culturally competent home-delivered meal program through which we've delivered over 3500 meals thus far that adhere to seniors' dietary restrictions and nutritionary needs. Our dedication to reducing

1 social isolation and promoting health and wellness
2 continues as we transition to virtual senior
3 programming, including informational lectures, yoga,
4 exercise, meditation, and creative aging. We've
5 continued to provide case management, including
6 assistance with doctors' appointments, medication
7 management, health insurance, SNAP, and housing
8 applications. We also provide telephone reassurance,
9 counseling, ESL, and citizenship classes, and
10 technology classes, among other programs. India Home
11 has been working hard to provide these services thus
12 far to one of the most vulnerable populations during
13 this pandemic, and we know that there's a lot more to
14 face in the months to come. And while we know
15 discretionary funding is facing budget cuts,
16 organizations supporting the APA community like ours
17 provide essential services that are vital to the
18 relief and stabilization of APA communities. And we
19 need your discretionary and capital support to be
20 able to do so.
21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.
22 SHARANYA PALAY: But with your help we
23 can continue to feed the growing needs and take this
24 head-on. Thank you.
25

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Joanne Yu.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JOANNE YU: Thank you, Speaker Johnson, Chairs Dromm and Gibson, and all of our City Council allies for this opportunity to testify. My name is Joanne Yu and I'm the executive director of the Asian American Federation. We represent a network of [inaudible] member and partner agencies and I want to definitely give all of our members and partners a shout-out because I know they've been holding me down in the community since January. For our community this hasn't been, ah, COVID hasn't been a challenge since March and the lockdown, ah, it's been a challenge since January from all the hate crimes [inaudible], ah, that our communities have issued. Um, I sent, I submitted a very light reading of eight pages of recommendations, so I'm not gonna hit on that. But I do want to recognize that in the midst of this pandemic the City Council has the impossible task of balancing our limited budget on programs that [inaudible] the most, ah, the most New Yorkers. Um, a couple things I do want to point out. This is an opportunity to ensure that communities of color, who

have always been underserved, under-resourced, um, that we get our fair share of programs. Nonprofits that know, ah, who are on the ground serving the black, Latino, Asian communities are best, um, experts, um, that know how to serve in language, serve with cultural competency, and we ask you to support our nonprofit organizations. We, as many of you know because this has been our drumbeat for many years that we have, you know, we need to have, ah, contract reform that, ah, from marginalized communities that relegate us to subcontract status. Um, we have to honor existing contracts so we can, ah, continue to service our communities. I do, I also agree that all city agencies include [inaudible] on the budget. Um, I think, you know, we can't, if we can't provide services for our seniors and our kids we certainly, NYPD shouldn't get to keep their entire budget. I want to recognize the work that we're doing with, ah, communities of color solidarity by investing with programs that educate and build, um...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

JOANNE YU: ...solidarity. And, ah, in, there's, you know, eight pages of recommendations, I

just want to say. But on behalf of this, the federation, all our members, I'm sure they're grateful to this legislative body for this opportunity to testify. I recognize and realize that this budget is limited. But how we choose to spend those resources must [inaudible] of our shared, shared values for our city. We are counting on the City Council's leadership to set us on a course that prioritizes accountability and economic fairness for all. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Joanne. Let's go to the next.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Gida Fisher.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

GIDA FISHER: Hi. Hi, my name is Gida Fisher. I'm the executive director of the Korean American Family Service Center. Thank you, Chair, um, Dromm and the NYC Council Finance Committee for this opportunity to testify. For 31 years the Korean American Family Service Center has served Korean Asian immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and child abuse. Our survivors and their children are the most marginalized and vulnerable at the best of time and

2 even more so during this COVID-19 pandemic. 100% of
3 Korean American Family Service Center staff are
4 bilingual and bicultural. 98% of our clients are
5 immigrants. All our services are provided in a
6 culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate
7 setting. Ms. Y, who was being abused, um,
8 physically, mentally, and sexually by her partner.
9 He was threatening her and withholding immigration
10 status for many years. Her partner is the sole
11 financial provider, and during this pandemic he
12 withheld money and used the financial and public
13 health scare to isolate Ms. Y and her son from
14 reaching out to get help. During this time while
15 schools are closed and Ms. Y's son is home, it became
16 evident that the partner was also sexually abusing
17 her stepson. This is only of many daunting stories
18 [inaudible] essential services are navigating during
19 this public health crisis. In the past eight weeks
20 KAFSC's 24-hour hotline call volume has doubled and
21 our crisis intervention services have increased to
22 respond to the increasing number of violent incidents
23 at home. 80% of our hotline calls are related to
24 domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse.
25 The other 20% are all COVID-19-related issues, such

as food and housing insecurities, emergency cash assistance, unemployment or other public benefits, language assistance, access to digital devices, and so much more. Now more than ever our services are needed by [inaudible] survivors...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

GIDA FISHER: ...and their children, especially as we look towards the recovery efforts. Community-based organizations like KAFSC that serve the immigration, immigrant population are critical partners for the city and we urgently ask the city to continue providing fair and equitable city funding to the providers that are working on the front line as essential workers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Gida.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rashny Ahmed.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

RASHNY AHMED: Good afternoon. I'm ? Rashney Ahmed, outreach coordinator at Women for Afghan Women. Thank you, Chair Dromm and members of the committee on finance for your support in the 15% and Growing campaign and for this opportunity. WAW has been providing comprehensive and culturally specific social services to low-income immigrants

2 from the Afghan South Asian Muslim communities in New
3 York City since 2003. In the two months since
4 working remotely WAW has already reached out to over
5 5000 community members to find out what kind of
6 support they need during this time. An overwhelming
7 number of our community members need assistance with
8 filing for unemployment, SNAP, and other financial
9 support because they have lost their livelihoods.
10 Our community relies on us to connect them to
11 essential services and basic necessities like food,
12 health care, and shelter. Our domestic violence
13 cases have increased these last two months. We are
14 constantly providing counseling by phone, helping
15 survivors access critical resources and basic needs.
16 One staff member provided financial support out of
17 her own pocket to a survivor who recently got out of
18 her abusive relationship, lost her job due to the
19 pandemic, has no support network, and has to care for
20 her infant child alone. Our work has always been
21 essential and now more than ever because WAW is one
22 of the few organizations that offer services in
23 [inaudible] and all of New York. While our community
24 members can request for interpretation services, the
25 interpreters available often do not speak the same

dialect. We fill this gap. City agencies call us for language support. Our local precinct, doctors' office, law offices, partner organizations, and the Family Justice Centers know that they can call us. We are the first number folks in our community call because of the trust they have in us. We respectful request for the City Council to continue supporting human service organizations and work towards budget equity in the upcoming fiscal year during this most critical...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

RASHNY AHMED: ... time for immigrants and specifically Asian Pacific New Yorkers. Thank you for your support.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I will now call the next panel. Darrell Cornick Becker, Regina Mitchell, Latoya Beecham, Carmen Lopez Vianel, Joanie Billy, Taylor McGraw, Kylin Kwek Ruck, and Jorge Morales.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DARRELL CORNICK BECKER: Good afternoon. My name is Darrel Cornick Becker and I'm a policy associate at the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. Thank you, Chair Dromm and all the members

of the Finance Committee for holding today's hearing. For further detail I refer you to our written testimony. Today I will focus on key areas to ensure 1.7 million New York City children and their families have supports needed, not just to survive and recover, but to thrive following this pandemic. First, we need to fund summer youth programming as a vehicle for recovery. The elimination of COMPASS, Sonic, Beacon, and Cornerstone summer programs and SYEP will leave nearly 175,000 children in NYC with no options for summer. Afterschool programs have already adapted how they engage children and serve their communities, helping families with remote learning, engaging remote arts, and in recreation, and helping delivering meals. Continuing this over the summer will be vital to meeting the educational, health, and economic needs of children and families as a result of this crisis. Second, we must expand enrollment at the DOE's regional enrichment centers to students in temporary housing. More than one in 10 students in NYC schools lacked current housing last year and their move to remote learning has presented them with a new set of challenges. The RECs are under enrolled and could provide them with

space and guidance to learn remotely. Third, we urge the City Council to increase school behavioral health supports through a mental health support continuum and maintain council-funded mental health initiatives. We also urge increased funding for emergency food assistance and to maximize uptake of federal nutrition programs. We ask that the city mitigate state cuts to Article 6 public health programs, which will be essential for combating the effects of COVID-19. Fourth, CCC and the Family Homelessness Coalition urge the council to consider short- and long-term strategies for housing security, including upstream prevention, improving shelter conditions, expediting exits out of shelter, and supporting the nonprofit sector. Once the moratorium on evictions is lifted the city will need to respond swiftly to prevent a housing crisis. Finally, in the area of child welfare the city should explore the timing of new preventive services contracts, protect capacity for...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

DARREN CORNICK BECKER: ...general prevention, and leveraged federal resources. General prevention services are even more critical now to

maintain children safety and family stability. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Regina Mitchell.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

REGINA MITCHELL: Thank you and good afternoon. My name is Regina Mitchell, the program director of [inaudible] program. Um, thank you, Speaker and council members for the opportunity to testify today. Um, yesterday I had the pleasure of listening to council members' questions, the commissioner of [inaudible] and staff about the plans in place for, for the city's youth for the summer and what I heard was no funding, no plan. With all due respect, the city has plans to bring back the work force, which includes our [inaudible] and participants, to keep our seniors cool, to feed the masses, to open parks, streets, beaches, and businesses, but no plan for our youth. If we, if we fail to plan for our youth then we plan to fail them. Pre-COVID-19 we used the words like at risk, high risk, and vulnerable to describe the youth I speak of today. Without summer programs they will become more vulnerable at a higher risk, and not just from COVID-

19, but also from the absence of supervision, unlawful gatherings, negative police contact, and [inaudible] instability, to name a few. During this pandemic our youth have expressed the need to be a part of what we are doing in our community program. They have reasons why they should be a part of the service-related activities, ah, that are being provided to their families and the community at large. They just want to be part of the solution. And while we work for our city, state, and federal government to make decisions about funding for the summer they are planning and without positive [inaudible] structure the outcomes will not be good. As a parent and an essential worker I believe that community programs can continue to provide structured activities this summer. I can go into all the reasons why a plan for our youth this summer is vital. But those of you on the DYPD call yesterday made those points. Instead, I want to bring to your remembrance the reasons why you fund...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

REGINA MITCHELL: ...Cornerstone, Beacon, Sonic, and COMPASS programs. You fund these programs because you still believe that the children are our

future and it's because of that belief you understand why it's important to restore funding for youth programs. This summer presents the greatest opportunity for our youth to establish themselves as vital assets in their own communities and throughout New York City. We employ the City Council to [inaudible] funding to keep our community programs open this summer. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Now let's go to our next panelist.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Latoya Beecham.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

LATOYA BEECHAM: Good afternoon. My name is Latoya Beecham and I'm a sophomore at Hero High School in the Bronx. I'm also a [inaudible] ambassador and I'm also a member of Teens Take Charge. I appreciate the SYEP campaign because nothing but perseverance, determination, and just attention from our City Council members and fellow adults have come out of it and I appreciate the interest in [inaudible] voices and our low-income and our minority groups. This is showing that youth supports is very powerful. Countless cuts have been

made and most of the cuts have been to our education and our schools, and it's drastically affected the low-income communities. Going to schools that, going to a school that has an inadequate amount of laptops and not enough calculators for our math classes is the last thing, the last thing we need are budget cuts. Since quarantine has started, I've struggled with keeping updated on school tasks for the fact that it's become overwhelming, and being forced to go from books, papers, and pencils to doing everything remotely on crappy internet. I've struggled with my mental health being isolated from my friends and my extended family and cooped up in my room. Let's not forget about depression that comes from, depression that comes from worrying about where will I get my back-to-school supplies. With these expenses covered by SYEP I wouldn't have to worry about where my father would get the money to pay for those resources. But no one should have to worry that they weren't able to, they won't be able to pay for essential supplies. And I know that thousands of other youths are in the same position as me. It's not the same position, more dire. Cutting these programs will not only affect us now, but they will

2 affect us in the future. We are, we are already at a
3 disadvantage and we don't need anymore setbacks.
4 SYEP will not only be a break, but it will also be an
5 educational opportunity and build character. Not
6 only would it give me exposure to potential career
7 paths, but I'd also be able to have a way to pay for
8 my expenses this year.
9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.
10 LATOYA BEECHAM: SYEP must be [inaudible]
11 mold your minds, and be accessible. It must serve at
12 least 75,000 youths. We have been radiating
13 determined energy and we will not stop fighting for a
14 fair, accessible, and engaging SYEP this summer.
15 Thank you.
16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Let's go
17 to the next person, please.
18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Carmen Lopez Vianel.
19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.
20 CARMEN LOPEZ VIANEL: Good afternoon. My
21 name is Carmen Lopez Vianel. I'm a junior at Beacon
22 High School and a member of Teens Take Charge. I
23 participated in SYEP during the summer after my
24 freshman year. The program provided me with
25 financial independence, work experience, and a

community that has given me indelible support and incredible opportunity since. As it turns out, these benefits, income, security, and support are exactly what I and countless other New York City students need right now. The Summer Youth Employment Program when shifted online can start to make up for the systemic inequities of our city's social and educational systems, especially in their cruel iterations through this pandemic. SYEP can and must serve the city's most vulnerable youth as a source of education, mental well-being, and financial stability. It's become clear that you all understand the importance of SYEP, as does the DYCD commissioner, Bill Chong. At the Youth Services hearing yesterday he committed to carrying out a version of SYEP this summer. But we're not done. SYEP must be engaging, formative, and accessible. That means that it must be informed and planned by young people and it must serve at least 75,000 youth. The commissioner also suggested that the summer program be supported through a combination of city, state, and private funding. But just to be clear, the funding for the city's youth must come primarily from the city budget. The mayor and City Council

cannot shirk their responsibility to support young, low-income New Yorkers. We need you to fund SYEP. Though this hearing largely lacks essential youth voice, we can help with that. I'll refer you to all to the more than 200 written youth testimonies we've submitted to the City Council. And we expect you to listen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. We'll now go to our next person, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Joanie Billy.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JOANIE BILLY: Hi, ah, my name is Joanie Billy. I am the director of Strategic Partnerships and External Affairs for PowerPlay. I'd like to begin by thanking the council members for taking time today to hear our testimony and for their crucial leadership and support of our work and youth development. PowerPlay serves as the lead agency for the Sports Training And Role Model for Success Citywide Girls' Initiative, also known as STARSCGI, a collaboration of 10 leading New York City nonprofits helping girls and young women of color overcome barriers to success, gain access to high-quality out-of-schools activities, and develop as leaders in

their communities. The 10 partners include PowerPlay, Girls Right Now, Groundswell, Lower East Side Girls' Club, Rome NY, Sadie Nash Leadership Project, The Armory Foundation, Figure Skating in Harlem, Girls' Agenda Equity, and the Bella Abzug Leadership Institute. Now heading into our seventh year, we have collectively served nearly 30,000 girls and gender nonconforming youth across all five boroughs and in all 51 City Council districts. COVID-19 has negatively impacted the lives of our girls and their families in profound ways. The outbreak and accompanying economic hardship disproportionately affects the most marginalized communities. The already pervasive opportunity and access gaps are exacerbated as students face increased instability, health fears, barriers to remote learning, heightened distress and anxiety about their futures, and lost opportunities during this crucial time in their lives. The disparities exposed by COVID-19 reinforce the need for STARSCGI programs because we know that when the virus restrictions lift we will see an even greater demand for our programs and services. For FY20 STARSCGI sought out to close the wellness gap with our

initiative programming and we remain steadfast in our mission to be a source, resource to our community. As of May 2020 the stars partners have already served over 5000 youth in all 51 City Council districts.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

JOANIE BILLY: Since COVID-19 the 10 organizations have joined forces to create the STARSCGI Summer Syllabus, capturing the depth and diversity of our programs across arts, literature, sports, leadership, and activism, with a focus on filling the gaping hole of summer youth programming. We will promote the calendar widely, converting the majority of our programs to be open to the public while remaining free of cost. Today the STARSCGI partners respectfully request the reinstatement of 1.4 million dollars in FY21 from the council, again, on behalf of girls and gender nonconforming youth of color across New York City. Thank you in advance for your continued support. STARSCGI is meeting a variety of needs for thousands of vulnerable youth across all five boroughs, particularly girls of color. And these achievements would not have been possible without your strategic input and collaboration. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Thank you, Joanie.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Taylor McGraw.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

TAYLOR MCGRAW: Good afternoon, council leaders and everyone who is watching at home. My name is Taylor McGraw. I am the executive director of The Bell and I'm here today in solidarity with our Teens Take Charge leaders who have been working around the clock to save the summer youth employment program. Teens Take Charge has been at the council a number of times before to testify on the topic of school segregation. New York has one of the most segregated public school systems in the nation, a shameful and embarrassing fact. The reason I bring it up today because the issue of segregation is not limited to the walls of school. Segregation impacts all aspects of young people's lives. So when we talk about the Summer Youth Employment Program let's keep in mind that SYEP is one of the few programs that actually narrows the opportunity gaps that our segregated school system widens. If you need any evidence of the potential for productive remote work this summer, just look at what four Teens Take Charge

interns, Latoya, Jorge, Kylin, and Carmen, have done in the past six weeks to lead a massive citywide campaign to save SYEP. They have worked with dozens of SYEP providers on a really smart and achievable plan for a remote SYEP this year. Ah, we will be sharing that plan with the DYCD folks tomorrow and we invite all of you to add your name to that plan. You can find it at teamstakecharg.com/syep2020. Thank you all so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. Next, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kylin Kwek Ruck.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

KYLIN KWEK RUCK: Hi, thank you so much. Ah, my name is Kylin Kwek Ruck. I'm a sophomore at Bard High School [inaudible] college as well as a member of Teens Take Charge. This spring has been a challenging time for all of us. Families are struggling with the losses and suffering of families and friends from COVID-19, the physical demands of recovering from it, economic strains, people lose employment, businesses close, and the mental and emotional strain of isolation at home, online learning, and overall insecurity about the future.

The entire city is feeling the pain of the major economic deficit and budget cuts to programs throughout the city are inevitable. In the first round of budget adjustment SYEP was among the only programs fully eliminated from the city's budget and the DYCD was slashed by 24%. In contrast, the NYPD had a cut of less than half of 1%. Programs that serve city youth, those who futures will be hit the hardest and longest by this crisis, cannot bear to afford so much additional injury from these excessive cuts. SYEP has been a cornerstone for investing in youth by providing jobs and opportunities. Those who participate in this life-changing program have better attendance in school, lower incarceration rates, and higher rates of employment. A socially distanced SYEP in 2020 must have youth leaders involved in every step of design and development of the program, offer small, rigorous, remote internships, and cohorts of [inaudible] ensure that any young person can participate regardless of job limitation status, must not be paid for by borrowing from other summer youth programs. It must use public funds for direction stipends for youth and per-participant fees

to providers. It must provide no less than 75,000 slots to deserving New York City youth. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jorge Morales.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JORGE MORALES: [inaudible] committee and to all of those watching this hearing. My name is Jorge Morales. I'm a rising junior at the University of Rochester, where I am double major in political science with a concentration in political economy and business with a concentration in finance. I am also a Teens Take Charge alum, mentor, and leader of Save SYEP campaign. Today I am here to testify in regards to the Summer Youth Employment Program and to other crucial youth programming that has been cut by this administration. My testimony will overview the work that Teens Take Charge has taken, has done to fight the youth programming and final SYEP 2020 plan that we put together. Upon hearing rumors about the essential cuts of the youth programming, many young people began to show concern about their summer and, more importantly, about the experiences that they would have missed out on. It was then that Teens Take Charge launched this campaign. Since then we have accomplished several things. We have obtained

more than 33,000 signatures in our petition to save SYEP. We have published about 6 op eds from affected youth through various news outlets ranging from the *New York Daily News* [inaudible]. We have obtained the support for full restoration from about 50 council members, and we have received, ah, support for our SYEP 2020 plan from close to 100 organizations from all over the city. We have submitted over 200 testimonies for today's hearing, many of them from affected youth, and many more to come. These are some of the many things that the campaign has done in our efforts to save youth programming. The work and fight that the youth has put forward should not go unnoticed. We have put together a plan that sets a pivotal benchmark for what the youth feels SYEP should be included, um, in the summer. And the plan lays out, lays out priorities, program components, program [inaudible] an example [inaudible]. This plan, once again, has been supported with close to 100 organizations around the city. I ask you to look at this plan, um, it can be found by going to teenstakecharge.com/syep2020. At last, I urge you all to...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

JORGE MORALES: ...[inaudible] in this crucial process as they should all have a say in the [inaudible] directly and [inaudible] affect them, their communities, and our future, especially for those [inaudible] programs that serve many of the minority communities that have seen worst affected by this pandemic. Youth programming is not a cost, it is an investment, an investment that is more important now than ever. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be Andrea Sands, Sarah Derry Oshiro, Hassan Shaficala, Denabe Akbar, Lauren Shapiro, Emma Ketteringham, and Alice Frontier.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ANDREA SANDS: Hi, my name is Andrea Sands. I'm [inaudible] charge of the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, or NYIFUP, at the Brooklyn Defender Services. We are asking that the council continue to support NYIFUP, the national model for immigrant defense against detention and deportation. During this pandemic NYIFUP has literally been fighting for our clients' lives. In March we sprang into action, working long hours to

fight for the release of clients facing life-threatening conditions as COVID-19 began to spread in jails and detention. NYIFUP staff filed countless release requests with ICE, which resulted in some releases, but not enough, so we started filing habeas corpus petitions in federal court. In late March NYIFUP providers won back-to-back presidential federal court victories, which were the first orders in the country finding that ICE is deliberately indifferent to the health of high-risk people in detention, freeing 17 people in two days and starting a wave of court orders. We've shared resources with advocates across the country and coordinated with other advocates on national class actions. Since then the three NYIFUP offices, the Legal Aid Society, the Bronx Defenders, and Brooklyn Defenders services have filed over 40 federal court actions in, ah, two months and won the release of 150 people as a result of our litigation and advocacy. We're still fighting today as COVID-19 cases continue to rise in jails and the first ICE detainees in other states have died. We need to keep fighting to ensure that ICE does not re-detain clients when stay-at-home orders start to lift. So this has been some of the most meaningful

work of my life and we're asking that the council make sure to keep us in this fight.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you. Next, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sarah Derry Oshiro.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SARAH DERRY OSHIRO: Hi, my name is Sarah Derry Oshiro. I'm the director of the immigration practice of the Bronx Defenders and as Andrea said, um, we are another one of the NYIFUP providers in New York City. Um, I want to highlight the fact that during the, this period of time when many of the other court systems have shut down or slowed, ah, the deportation machine in immigration court has continued. Um, the detained courts have not closed so our clients' cases are moving forward, um, even as there is chaos around us in the court systems, um, have been, our, our court system have been struggling to function. Um, we have had to keep up with constant changes to policies and protocols at the non-detained court system with respect to when documents must be filed, where they must be filed, how they can be filed and, um, it's absolutely, it's very logistically challenging to actually get things

where they need to be so that our clients can have their day in court. Um, we have been persistently advocating with every agency possible, with the immigrant court, with ICE, the local jails, with, ah, elected officials at the state and federal levels, um, for policy that will actually protect our clients and our staff, um, and that has up, ah, a lot of our energy as we also on top of our ongoing representation of our clients in court, um, and we have also dedicated a lot of our resources on top of that litigation that Andrea mentioned and our regular representation to, to being a voice in local and national media so that we can elevate, um, our clients' experiences in detention, um, facing deportation, where they are at grave risk of infection, um, and to make sure that their voices are heard and to support that advocacy that we're doing in court to get, ah, everybody possible released, um, and united with their family members, and to keep fighting for due process for [inaudible]...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, next please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hassan Shaficala.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: TIME STARTS NOW.

HASSAN SHAFICALA: Good afternoon. My name is Hassan Shaficala. I'm the attorney in charge of the immigration unit at the Legal Aid Society. I want to address NYIFUP, iCare, IOI, and our federal [inaudible]. [inaudible] the testimony from our NYIFUP partners at Brooklyn and Bronx Defenders [inaudible]. ICE enforcement and community raids have resumed in the midst of this pandemic and we've heard reports of ICE raids happening during a [inaudible] and we expect to pick up those cases through NYIFUP intake. As COVID begins to abate, ICE may seek to re-detain the clients that we got out over the last two months, claiming that the jails are safe again, but the jails were already unsafe due to substandard conditions, even before the [inaudible] ongoing and increasing challenges that our detained clients face, bringing NYIFUP providers together are requesting an enhancement from 16 million to 18.2 million dollars in fiscal 21. Switching gears and talking just a little bit about iCare, [inaudible] is part of the iCare Coalition, workers and unaccompanied minors and families with children, which the council had funded since 2014 in response to the city bar association's resolution supporting

universal rapid [inaudible] for children in immigration court iCare is requesting an enhancement of 1.4 million to a total of 5.4 million expanded representation of kids in immigration court. With the IOI program, Legal Aid provides services through our immigration employment and [inaudible] domestic violence units, um, and we also have 23 subcontracting agencies and we request level funding in the next fiscal year. And then finally [inaudible] work has never more necessary or important. [inaudible] respectfully requesting about $700,000 to build up our federal practice [inaudible] region and federal litigation challenging two different public charge rules [inaudible] arrests in and around courthouses, wrongful denial of special immigrant juvenile status for young people ages 21 and more, and as my colleague Andrea just mentioned, together with Brooklyn and Bronx Defenders we've filed numerous individual and group habeas cases to get people out of immigration detention, but for this work to be sustainable we need to build up a robust and funded federal team and request the council's support. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Denabe Akbar.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DENABE AKBAR: Thank you. Good afternoon, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity, rather. My name Denabe Akbar and I'm the managing attorney of the Family Defense Practice at Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem. And, yes, together with Brooklyn Defender Services, the Bronx Defenders, and the Center for Family Representation represent over 1200 parents and Article 10 child protection cases each year and since 2007 we have collectively represented approximately 40,000 parents in family court, touching the lives of more than 8000, 80,000 children. Our offices work in interdisciplinary teams to provide holistic representation to low-income parents who face the potential loss of their children to the foster system. We are testifying today regarding two critical needs. First, we urge the City Council to ensure that the Mayor's Office for Criminal Justice maintains our funding as an [inaudible]...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We lost your, ah, audio.

DENABE AKBAR: Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And the screens are frozen, I think.

DENABE AKBAR: Can you hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can hear you. Ah, Chair Dromm, we'll check in with you to see if you have a tech issue on your end.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, we're good, I'm good now.

DENABE AKBAR: OK. So first we urge the City Council to ensure that the Mayor's Office for Criminal Justice maintain our funding at the FY20 level. We are currently funded in the executive budget for FY21 at FY16 levels, which is a reduction of one-third from FY21. Maintaining FY16 level funding will have a devastating impact on how low-income, on low-income families in New York City. Second, we urge you to continue the fund, to fund the Right to Have Family Advocacy Initiative, which began last year with the generous support of Chairman Levin and Speaker Johnson and has provided low-income parents with access to representation during child protection investigations and in hearings to eliminate unnecessary barriers to employment. The

pandemic has brought New York City family courts to a screeching halt and has thrown the child protection system into complete disarray. It has also caused or exacerbated housing, income, and food instability in the city, the most common social conditions leading to child protection investment. In addition to the physical, social, mental health, and economic impacts of stay-at-home orders, our clients, the vast majority of whom are the same black and brown communities that are being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, they are also experiencing the trauma of family separation. The need to adequately fund high-quality family defense to low-income parents who are involved in the child protection system...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

DENABE AKBAR: ...is more critical now than it has ever been. We ask you, ah, to continue to fully fund our work to keep New York City's most vulnerable and marginalized, ah, families safe and together, particularly as our model, which has been replicated across the state and across the country, saves the city millions and millions of dollars.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren Shapiro.

LAUREN SHAPIRO: Good afternoon.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

LAUREN SHAPIRO: [inaudible] family defense practice at Brooklyn Defender Services and on behalf of the family defense providers we're urging the City Council to ensure adequate funding for family defense work, which is essential work in this time. Despite over a decade of high-quality representation that has shown to save the city 40 million dollars a year [inaudible] and despite having developed programs that are the national and state models of family representation, the mayor's budget this year contains a dramatic decrease of 8.7 million dollars in funding for the family defense providers. This reduction is not due to COVID, but it is part of a disturbing pattern with the city's funding of family defense representation. Since fiscal year 16 our base revenue has been set at the same level each year, despite the need that we show each year for funding to maintain new intake and pending case loads. Each year through a contract amendment

process MOCJ supplements our shortfall in funding to access for new clients acquired through intake and for the large pending caseloads that we all carry with us from year to year because our clients have multiple and very complex cases and our clients' cases last over two years. So each year we have had an amendment to our contract to make up for shortfalls. But this is a really challenging way to run programs. In fact, we just had our fiscal year 20 contracts amended to make up for the missing resources. Our current contract is now registered at the lower level of fiscal year 16 and the mayor's budget doesn't include the additional funds that we need to maintain last year's level. This shortfall is all the more dire because with access to the courts drastically limited due to COVID our cases are being adjourned for months on end. Our pending case loads are steady, um, but we have very little...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

LAUREN SHAPIRO: ...supports to litigate hearings at this time. What we are facing while we are at the same time representing parents day in and day out, who have children in foster care who aren't getting visitation with their children, who, um, are

trying to reunify with their children under these very difficult circumstances, we're working hard every day on these cases, dealing with a backlog in court, and what we're facing is a huge bottleneck of cases when the court is opened up. So we're urging the City Council to ensure that our funding is maintained. It must be maintained at least at the same level as last year, and thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Emma Ketteringham.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

EMMA KETTERINGHAM: Good afternoon. I'm the managing director of the Family Defense Practice at the Bronx Defenders. The family defense providers today collectively ask that you maintain fiscal year 20 funding for the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative in fiscal year 2021. This year, collectively we've represented hundreds of low-income parents during ACS investigations and during SCR hearings. With this initiative we avoid harmful and unnecessary family separations through the child welfare system. We advise parents of their rights, facilitate information-sharing, de-escalate conflict between parents and case workers. We correct

2 mistakes of fact, find housing, child care, and
3 social services, help identify parents' strengths,
4 supports, and resources, all to advocate for parents
5 in child safety conferences, where they would
6 otherwise site alone and outnumbered. The results of
7 this initiative are outstanding. In the Bronx alone
8 we represented 162 parents of 319 children so far,
9 and only four of those children went to the foster
10 system with strangers. The rest stayed at home or
11 lived with family while the issues at home were
12 addressed. This initiative is smart, it's cost
13 effective, and it protects our most vulnerable
14 families. And it also prominences equity by
15 providing low-income parents with the same access to
16 counsel as privileged parents when faced with the
17 awful prospect of losing one's children. This work
18 also corrects the economic injustice experienced by
19 parents after a child welfare investigation is
20 concluded by providing parents with access to counsel
21 and SCR hearings. These parents have no other access
22 to an attorney to challenge their name being on the
23 state child abuse central registry, even though their
24 employment will be severely limited...
25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

LAUREN SHAPIRO: There, this is an economic injustice that disproportionately is experienced by low-income and black and brown families in the city. And this initiative is addressing that disparity and is all the more critical in the wake of the pandemic when we do not want employment opportunities blocked unnecessarily. We urge the City Council to continue its support of low-income parents in New York City and fund the right to family advocacy initiative. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alice Frontier.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ALICE FRONTIER: Hi. I am the managing director of the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem. NDS has been providing holistic legal representation in northern Manhattan for 30 years. We have submitted joint testimony with our partner organization, addressing the needs of our criminal practice as well as our family practice. Ah, we've just heard testimony regarding the family practice. Um, so I am going to be focusing on the needs of the civil defense practice today. The communities that we serve are unique and diverse, but they share some

commonalities - widespread poverty, high arrest rates, large noncitizen population, and limited access to social and legal services. As you know, the coronavirus crisis is having a devastating and disparate impact on communities of color. Even after the city begins to reopen, we anticipate a long-lasting toll on the communities we serve. We believe this will be primarily in the civil legal realm. There is likely to be a housing crisis. Support for access to benefits will be in great need, and there will be significant employment issues. The NDS civil defense team is prepared to support our community through this crisis. But we need the support of City Council to make that possible. During this crisis, despite the eviction moratorium, New Yorkers have not been guaranteed the safety and stability of their housing. Landlords have attempted illegal evictions and fail to provide basic necessities, such as working bathrooms and heat. We have been there to fight for our clients' rights. However, as set forth in detail in our written testimony the funding for civil legal services, provided in part by the criminal trial contract and through the universal access to counsel program is insufficient to meet the

needs of our community, needs that have only been made greater by the current crisis. To serve our community, we have subdural a discretionary funding request. With the support of City Council we would be able to provide representation to every client who walks into our office as referred by the criminal or family team and who calls [inaudible].

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

ALICE FRONTIER: NDS has provided high-quality legal representation to the areas of Manhattan that need it the most for the past three decades. With your support, we are prepared to continue on as a source of strength and recovery from this crisis. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Dromm, we have comments from Chair, ah, Council Member Lancman.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Thank you all for, for your testimony. Um, you all went over the, the work that you've done, the work that you do, the work that you've done, um, during this crisis. Um, perhaps if, if someone, ah, doing the, the

immigration defense work and someone doing the, the family work could each talk about, um, what kind of, ah, surge you might expect, or what kind of different kinds of cases you might expect once we come out of this crisis, once we reopen, fully reopen the courts and, and our institutions of, of government and, and our economic life so we get a sense of what more you might need or, or how the legal services that you're providing might be different, um, in light of this two, three, four month lockdown that we all have, have endured.

[multiple people speaking simultaneously]

UNIDENTIFIED: Hello?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, did somebody want to answer that?

UNIDENTIFIED: I, I can answer for family defense, unless there's, um, so I think everyone knows that the COVID has disproportionately impacted the black and brown communities and those are the committees that our offices, ah, serve in the family defense practice and what we've seen is that we've literally had to work with every single client that we have, which collectively, um, is, are, are thousands of clients, um, to help them cope with

dealing with ACS, with dealing with their children, um, in terms of visits, and trying to get, we've been, um, fighting with the city to try to get as many children as we can home, um, because of the harm of separation during this horrible pandemic. Um, so we're working very hard to help our clients get back together with their children, to have as much as contact as possible with their children, and we're facing so many barriers to that because of the pandemic and the concerns about transportation and our clients not having adequate, um, electronic equipment, not being able to take public transportation. So we're dealing with all that. In the meantime, we're dealing with a court that for all essential purposes shut down, even though I think they're trying really hard to do things, but no trials, no hearings. The only hearings we have are when ACS is trying to, ah, remove children from their parents. We don't have the same access to hearings when we're trying to get families reunified. So we're very concerned that the foster care system is going to balloon again, that there's gonna be a lot more kids in foster care because they're coming into the system but not leaving as quickly. Um, we

anticipate a huge backlog in cases o, um, I think it's gonna take a long time for us to deal with, um, the huge impact that, that COVID is having on our client population, who are the, the people who are most affected.

UNIDENTIFIED: And if I could just add, um, the, the federal statute that requires the termination of parental rights, ah, proceedings to be filed and hasn't been told and so people who have no capacity whatsoever because of the limits of the, that the pandemic is creating to reunify with their children because they can't have visitations and they can't go to services. There's been a full stop put on reunification, in some cases where reunification was already very, very close. There's no way to sort of quantify the impact that that's gonna have six months from now, 12 months from now, 18 months from now, and how many more families are gonna be completely separated for all of eternity because of the impact of what's happening now.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: So one of the immigrant, immigration defense providers, just give us, ah, an answer to that question.

UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah, sure, thanks for the question. Um, with respect to the immigration courts, um, we, um, we are fearful and we, we know that as soon as, um, ICE continues to, um, resume these kinds of arrests that they were making prior to the shutdown of the city, um, they will be racing to fill the beds that have been somewhat emptied out by our tireless advocacy. Um, they have the financial incentives to keep as many people detained as possible and right now there are some vacancies, and we know that right before the shutdown they were in the midst of Operation Palladium in our city, which is punishing us and targeting us for being a so-called sanctuary city. They have militarized, um, CDP agents sent up from the border and terrorizing New York City's immigrant communities, um, and frankly it was really at record levels in terms of anything I've ever seen. Ah, the frequency and brutality of the arrests that they were engaging inc, you know, as recently as, as early March, so we fear that there will be, um, a large uptick of new detentions, which then will cause a backlog in court cases and result in people being detained for longer before their first court hearing and before their

subsequent court hearings. And as [inaudible] said earlier, we know that detention centers were never safe places to be, even before COVID. So, um, we, you know, we feel certain that there will be more New York residents snatched up from the city, put in these unsafe places, that is immigration jail, where they will continue to be at risk of severe illness, if not death, and their, and their cases will, again, be pending for quite some time. And on the non-detained court dockets anybody whose case was, was canceled, um, during the shutdown of the non-detained courts will face, um, perhaps quick rescheduling and, and a backlog there on the non-detained court. So we predict a lot of chaos on the courts, on the court end of things, and just a lot of people at risk of harm in ICE custody.

UNIDENTIFIED: And I'll add to that is, um, we're fortunate, ah, to the extent folks have counsel, the counsel will know about their next court date. For those same respondents they may not know check the 800 number for the courts. They may not get notices and so we may see an increase in people getting defaulted, um, by the immigration courts and similarly with, um, USCIS, the hearings have been

suspended during this period and will people get their reset notices, um, on time? It's unclear.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you. I think we're going to go on to our next panel.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The next panel will be Maria Bautista, Shayna Ramos, Jocelyn David Birch, and Randi Levine.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MARIA BAUTISTA: Hi all. Ah, my name is Maria Bautistia. I'm the campaign director at the Alliance for Quality Education. Hi, Council Member Dromm and everyone. I'm a member, I'm also a member of the [inaudible] task force and today I want to talk to you about inequity as we're here today to discuss a deeply immoral budget proposed by the mayor. New York City public schools have been plagued with systemic underfunding for decades. On New York shoulders, New York State shoulders, a lot of this responsibility, New York City has also driven policies and budgets that assure that there is deep inequity in our public schools. Mayor de Blasio talked about the tale of two cities as he ran for mayor almost eight years ago. He talked about the disparities in our public school system and worked to

make changes that while more fair were still inequitable. Today here we are as the city is balancing the budget on the backs of students. Students that have been grasped by a trauma and lost. Students that are facing monumental learning loss. Students that have, ah, that don't have technology or adequate support. Um, sorry, I'm encouraged to turn on my camera. Um, students that do not have technology or adequate support, students that are in abusive homes and in homeless shelters, black, brown, and poor students. We're deeply concerned about cuts to the Fair Student Funding formula. So far there are proposed cuts of up to 100 million dollars, and as the task force we've looked at the ways and talked to principals, teachers, students, and parents and overwhelming all stakeholders agree on one thing, the need for more Fair Student Funding money for our schools, not less. Cuts to Fair Student Funding formula would deeply hurt, ah, the needs of our schools, especially high-need schools, at a time where our children need all the support that they can get. Absolutely no cuts to the Fair Student Funding formula.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, oh, I'm sorry.

MARIE BAUTISTA: Do I still have time?

UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

MARIA BAUTISTA: Um, I was gonna say this. Budgets really are a, ah, moral document and they're a concrete way of measuring the priorities of our leadership and in the time where we're in an uphill fight to obtain a sense of normalcy, cutting teachers and guidance counselors, ballooning class sizes, and lack of supports for struggle students is the wrong direction. Um, divest from the NYPD and invest in our black and brown communities and our students. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Maria. OK. Next, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Shayna Ramos.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SHAYNA RAMOS: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Shayna Ramos and I live in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. I'd like to share with you how shortages in preschool special education classes have affected my 3-year-old son, Oliver. Oliver was diagnosed with autism spectrum

2 disorder and at his IEP meeting last August the DOE
3 determined that he needed a small preschool special
4 education class to meet his needs. However, the DOE
5 didn't have a seat available for my son anywhere in
6 Brooklyn. I called every preschool the DOE
7 recommended but they all told me they had no seats
8 available. Since the DOE failed to find a seat, I
9 started calling programs in other boroughs. The
10 closest seat I could find was in Woodhaven, Queens.
11 With no other option I enrolled Oliver. This class
12 has helped Oliver. However, before schools closed
13 the long trip to Queens took a toll. It took two
14 hours for the school bus to bring Oliver to school.
15 That meant that every day my 3-year-old preschooler
16 with autism had to sit on a bus for four hours.
17 Oliver had to wake up extra early to catch the bus
18 and was too tired to play with his classmates and had
19 terrible nightmares during nap time because his sleep
20 pattern was disrupted. I am speaking to you not only
21 as a mother, but also as a special education teacher.
22 For four years I worked as a teaching assistant in a
23 preschool special education program at a community-
24 based organization. I saw what a difference these
25 programs made for young children. However, my

coworkers and I were severely underpaid, which led to a high turnover rate. Even though I loved this job, I decided to leave work to work for a DOE school that offered a higher salary. I am asking the city to address the shortage of preschool special education classes. I know there are budget challenges, but these are legally required services and we can't afford to have our preschoolers go another year without the services they need. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Let's go to our next person.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jocelyn David Birch.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JOCELYN DAVID BIRCH: Yes, my, um, good afternoon. Um, I, too, have a preschooler named David that also has autism. Um, I would like to thank everyone first and foremost who, for this opportunity to speak. Um, I want to speak about how preschool or lack thereof has affected him. On January 1 of 2019 David aged out of early intervention. There were no readily available classroom options from CPSC until September. At that point it became a race against regression. I knew I had to get him in a classroom myself because a nine-

month wait was unacceptable. I couldn't work any secular job because I worked around the clock to secure a classroom somewhere and supporting services as quickly as possible. After eight [inaudible] weeks I finally secured a seat on February 25 of 2019. Due to the two months' gap in services it was a rough adjustment. He would frequently throw himself on the floor and have tantrums. With the dedication and expertise of the amazing teachers and therapists that have taken the time to know him and his individual needs, they have transformed both David and my entire household. He went from limited words to speaking in short sentences. That translated to him going from frequent full-blown tantrums to crossing his arms, rolling his eyebrows, and saying I'm mad, I'm sad. He can play with his siblings and organize games. That didn't happen before. He is an overall happier child and he has been able to tap into his potential in a significant way. In March 2020 the unthinkable happen. The world is on quarantine. All the schools are closed. Remember just...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

JOCELYN DAVID BIRCH: ...prior to that time David had a two-month lapse of service, followed by 12 months of school. Had I followed the original recommendation of September he would have missed out on so much more. On behalf of all parents, on behalf of all children with disabilities, special education was grossly underfunded before, please do not cut the funding now when it's needed more than ever. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Jocelyn. Thank you for that emotional story, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Randi Levine.

RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the opportunity...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

RANDI LEVINE: My name is Randi Levine and I'm policy director of Advocates for Children of New York. Protecting school funding is critical to the city's long-term recovery. If our schools do not have resources to address the unprecedented learning loss resulting from the pandemic, the resulting cohort of undereducated New Yorkers will have ripple effects on the economy for decades to come. Therefore, we strongly oppose the draconian cuts

proposed to the education budget. A 100 million dollar cut to fair student funding, to leave our schools with fewer teachers at exactly the time when students need more support. A 40 million dollar cut to school allocation memoranda with threatened school social workers, programs for children of autism, and literacy support. We urge you to negotiate a budget that rejects cuts to schools and provides support for the following priorities described in our written testimony and supported by Thrive coalitions. When school buildings reopen there must be a seat for every student, including preschoolers with disabilities. By early March hundreds of students were already sitting at home, not because of the pandemic, but because the DOE did not have enough seats in preschool special education classes for children with a legal right to them. The adopted budget must include sufficient funding for these legally mandated classes. This is not optional. When school buildings reopen every student must have a way of getting there, including students in foster care. Although last year's adopted budget said the administration agreed to ensure busing for students in foster care, which DOE has guaranteed only Metro

cards. As the DOE plans for transportation to restart, the city must guarantee door-to-door transportation for the relatively small number of students in foster care who need it to stay in their schools. When school buildings reopen every student must receive the mental health support they need. We urge the city to include in the budget 15 million dollars in new or existing funding for a mental health continuum to support the significant behavioral health needs of students and provide them with direct services, as recommended by the council in last year's preliminary budget response. And when school buildings reopen every student must have needed instructional...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

RANDI LEVINE: ...[inaudible]. As one step, the city should increase the capacity of existing DOE transfer schools to support recently arrived immigrant English language learners who have fallen behind. Even in our darkest days we have to continue to invest in our future and our schools are our best hope. That is absolutely key to full recovery. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Randi. Thank you for all the work that you do with advocates for children.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The next panel will be Dan Hanson, Mariana Cardozo, and Vanessa Ventola.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Hanson?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let's go to the second panelist and we'll come back if Mr. Hanson comes back.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mariana Cardozo?

MARIANA CARDOZO: Dear Council Members...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

MARIANA CARDOZO: Dear Council Members, as a member of New York City it is sad to see that the city is moving backwards with programs dedicated to doing better with our refuse. It's not a halt, it's a backwards move. Programs dedicated to organic recycling and [inaudible] waste collection represent a move in the right direction, recognizing problems and learning to do better. I praise New York City for implementing that. As a neuroscientist with a strong interest in understanding how people behave, I can tell you hard it is to create long-lasting

behavioral changes and encourage people to act more in line with their moral values without financial incentives. So I do not need to explain it out. The city knows the devastating effects of the plastic and glass recycling halts in 2002. I understand that these are unprecedented times and they require hard decisions. Helping programs that promote environmental justice [inaudible] help reverts the very dangerous consequences from climate change [inaudible] responsible. Schools are educating a generation that knows how to properly dispose of food scraps. Education is a very powerful behavior to change, as you know. Do not let it go to waste. Currently a lot of people are at home. Among other things, they are cooking at home and doing spring cleanings. What they do with their refuse it's very relevant for what happens next. This is a moment to expand responsible disposable refuse and hope that at least some of these behaviors will be long-lasting, even when we return to some normalcy. Please at least keep some portion of the programs working. [inaudible] locations with food scrapes and [inaudible] waste upgrading. And when the community comes to you through grassroots movements and ask to

help by, um, bringing refuse back to your [inaudible] please be there for us. I would love to, for everyone to have a green um, um, a brown beanbag, curbside pickup, as I had, I was very lucky. But that's hard. That's gonna be hard this year. But please keep the drop-off sites open and lets...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

MARIANA CARDOZO: ...the grassroots movements come to you. Thank you very much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dan Hanson.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mr. Hanson, we can't hear you. Did you unmute yourself? There you go. Well, nope, you muted yourself again. OK. You know what, take the headphones off.

DAN HANSON: How about now?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, now we can hear you.

DAN HANSON: All right, good. All right.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

DAN HANSON: My name is Dan Hanson, still, and I am a retired law librarian from Jamaica,

Queens. I would like to address the proposal for eliminating funding to the New York Compost Project for food scrap drop-off and processing. Taking the food scraps dropped off at farmers' markets and subway stations across the city, which, by the way, decreases the amount of waste put into our landfills by over 30%, the member organizations of the New York Compost Project mix these scraps with dead leaves and return the mixture to soil to be used in city parks and community gardens across neighborhoods. I am a graduate of the Master Compost Program at the Queens Botanical Gardens, class of 2016. As part of our training our class visited Earth Matter on Governors Island, worked building compost piles at the New York City Farm Museum, staffed tables at community events, and volunteered at food scrap-up sites. The New York Compost Project provides education, outreach, technical assistance, and free furnished compost to residents and community groups. The project's program to prepare for green jobs across the city. MCs are now on staff at the Department of Sanitation, Parks, botanical gardens, DEC, and are owners of micro hauling businesses. The compost community is a strong, welcoming, involved in local civics, and

results-oriented. In these times of great change to our city, our connection to our neighbors and across communities is vital. Please budget the necessary funds for these programs to continue. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Vanessa Ventola.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

VANESSA VENTOLA: Good afternoon, my name is, my name is Vanessa Ventola. I'm testifying in support of funding for community composting and recycling outreach programs. The preservation of Grow NYC's zero waste programs and the 26-year-old New York Compost Project is essential to reducing waste, building community, and changing the minds of New Yorkers about their impact on the environment and each other. I began composting in 2011 during an internship with the Western Queens Compost Initiative. Since then I've been privileged to work with some of New York City's most-loved environmental institutions, including a season with [inaudible] composting program and I worked four years with the New York Compost Project, hosted by the Lower East Side Ecology Center and by Queens Botanical Garden. I want to speak about the tremendous impact of the

New York Compost Project. During my time there I taught the New York City master composter course, workshops, trainings, and provided hands-on technical assistance to community spaces interested in composting. I would estimate that individually I met with thousands of New Yorkers each year and I helped to change minds and attitudes about waste management. I worked with dozens of community-based organizations to promote sustainability and facilitated programs for students in pre-K through college. My experience working with the New York Compost Project was in no way unique. Later today, testifiers will remind you of the beneficial environmental impacts of composting. Cities around the country and the world look to New York City for inspiration and advice. By cutting funding for community composting and recycling outreach, we would send a message that we do not take innovative waste management seriously. You may be familiar with the tagline of the New York Compost Project, rebuilding our soils neighborhood by neighborhood. I hope that I have made the case that these programs do much more than divert waste from landfills and produce compost, which, by the way, there is overwhelming demand for from residents and

community groups. Cutting this finding will result in more waste to landfills, less locally made compost, hurt and betray community members, and undoubtedly less support for organics collection when it is restored. We cannot let this happen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you. Next, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel. Stephanie Tosas, Dr. Cary Goodman, Kenrick Ross, Jesse Layman, Mohammed Attia, Matthew Shapiro, and Lorcan Lawrence Otway. Ms. Tosas?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

STEPHANIE TOSAS: Good afternoon, City Council members. My name is Stephanie Tosas and I am a member at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow program. I am also now one of OBT's program associates and I am here today to provide testimony why OBT programs are important and how they have changed my life. I attended Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow to obtain my high school equivalency diploma. I started at the young adult [inaudible] program both in my math and literacy skills, and after I accomplished them [inaudible] I moved on to

the [inaudible] program. We have been appreciated and celebrated during our attendance and can I express how grateful we were during our program. Um, however many days I didn't lose hope, I had this extremely support system from OBT and kept going. I entered a program with a newborn daughter so it was difficult for me but I was able to obtain my high school equivalency diploma in December of 2017. It has not only helped me, but my family, too, because my brothers [inaudible] we left an impact on our mother and gave her the confidence to apply. She now attends OBT adult high school [inaudible] program as well. OBT continues to support all [inaudible] every cycle, provided a safe space, and undivided attention to everyone. I know because I'm now one of the staff members who follow up with our students and our [inaudible] and alumni still face many obstacles, such as housing, benefits, and employment barriers. We want to continue to guide our participants, especially through this rough time due to COVID-19. It will be difficult if we do not have the tools to continue to do so. I want everyone to have the same opportunity that me and my family were given to, to build towards our future career. And we know since

with COVID going on and stuff we know after the economy everything opens back up we're gonna have a significant amount of alumni who plan to come to us and we want to be able to provide that support the same way we were given the chance to, to provide that support for other families. I want to thank everyone, and thank you for your time and consideration. I hope everyone stays safe and healthy.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dr. Cary Goodman.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

DR. CARY GOODMAN: [inaudible]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'm sorry, Dr. Goodman, um, but we're unable to hear you. It is possible to move a little bit closer to your microphone?

DR. CARY GOODMAN: [inaudible]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Dr. Goodman? Dr. Goodman? Dr. Goodman? Dr. Goodman, we can't hear you.

DR. CARY GOODMAN: [inaudible]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next. We can't hear him.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kenrick Ross?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

KENRICK ROSS: Good afternoon, Speaker Johnson, Chairs Dromm and Gibson, and members of the City Council. I am the manager of a commercial lease assistance program which provides free legal representation for lower-income small business owners through the Department of Small Business Services funding. The [inaudible] program has been a life-saver for these businesses and it's quickly become a front line COVID-19 response program. 90% of our work since March is COVID-related. However, part of preliminary budget, the CLA program is being eliminated. Many council members already know our work. Chair Dromm, we had a webinar in your district this week. Chair Gibson, you shouted out our work yesterday. Even Commissioner Dorris pointed to us as a vital resources for small businesses. Our program is unique. We do actual negotiation representation, working with clients for weeks, months, even years. We negotiate fair leases and renewals, fight and end landlord harassment, and build long-term relationships. Since mid March we have seen a tenfold demand for services. It is inconceivable [inaudible] underserved small businesses face utter

devastation this program would not be renewed. Other clients are 99% lower-income, 75% minority, two-thirds immigrant, and nearly 60% women. They have received little, if any support, from anywhere during this pandemic. They also serve the community's hardest hit. If the CLA program is not renewed they will have no access to legal help when they need it most in months and years to come. This is unconscionable, an outrage. Yet this is exactly what is happening in the preliminary budget. On behalf of the commercial lease assistance programs, free legal services providers, and hundreds, thousands of small businesses in the city would have no access to legal support. We implore you to ensure the CLA program is fully funded next year and we ask is this how we are helping small businesses during this pandemic? Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jesse Layman.

JESSE LAYMAN: Thank you, good afternoon.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

JESSE LAYMAN: Ah, good afternoon, and thank you, Chairman Dromm and the members of the council for giving us, the members of the public, this chance to testify on this year's budget. As I

think some earlier commenters, ah, mentioned, ah, the budget is a moral document and this year budget's will be a genuine test of our city's morals and values as we have to weigh austerity against recovery in the context of declining revenue. My name is Jesse Layman and I'm the director of policy at the Employment and Training Coalition, which supports the city's work force development community, ah, with over 170 member organizations, community-based organizations, educational institutions, and labor management groups. Ah, today I'm here to give voice to their share of concerns and that of the city's larger nonprofit community, ah, as well as the city's local employers and the now millions of unemployment and underemployed jobs [inaudible]. Um, we have four points that I'll quickly summarize that we really wish the council could take into consideration. Number one, ah, all of our stakeholders feel strongly the city should not adopt an austerity budget in this crisis, ah, and there are alternatives. The city could instead make use of the unique borrowing opportunity offered by the federal reserve or the city could instead adopt, ah, new revenue-generating measures or work with the state on new revenue-

generating measures. And indeed the city could, instead of adopting a full year's worth of draconian cuts or forestall final passage of a city budget until the nature of the next federal stimulus bill is known. Our second point is that if the mayor and council feel that passing a budget with significant cuts is unavoidable, those cuts should come only at the expense of budget items that do not benefit the communities hit hardest by the coronavirus, largely low-income communities of color. And we should especially focus on cutting programs that actively harm those communities, such as the criminal justice apparatus. Ah, third, under no circumstances are cuts to contracts with local community-based organizations advisable or acceptable. They are on the front lines of fighting the coronavirus for us right now. And fourth, finally, ah, we would like to city to begin thinking about new ways to help our economy recover after this crisis both rapidly...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

JESSE LAYMAN: ...and [inaudible], ah, as the best way to balance our budget in future years is going to be with a fast-paced and broad-based economic recovery. Ah, there, expansions on those

ideas in our written testimony. I encourage you to take a look at those if you can. Thank you for your time and your consideration this afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mohammed Attia.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

MOHAMMED ATTIA: Good afternoon, council members. My name is Mohammed Attia. I'm the executive director of the Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center. We need the City Council to step into its role as representative of a sanctuary city on behalf of immigrant New Yorkers and their communities and pass a budget that secures the well-being of our immigrant communities and prioritizes the recovery of the immigrant-owned small businesses that make our city great. There are approximately 20,000 street vendors in New York City, a people who sell food and merchandise. 90% of the street vendor project's members are low-wage immigrant workers who rely on busy streets in order to survive and are reporting income losses of 70% to 90%. As small business owners and workers, street vendors contribute approximately 293 million dollars to the city's economy, yet despite their critical

role street vendors have been excluded from all disaster relief at every level of government. The government-sponsored relief programs leave out informal businesses, such as street vendors, due to rigorous technological and documentation requirements. But perhaps the biggest barrier is the lack of Social Security number. A significant number of vendors are undocumented, which means they will not even qualify for unemployment benefit despite collecting and paying sales taxes just like any other business. In New York City immigrant-owned small business compromise 48% of our city's roughly 220,000 small businesses. The short-term solution needed for the current financial hardship that street vendors are facing is an immediate response from the city by creating granting programs that [inaudible] street vendors as sole proprietors of their businesses regardless their immigration status. We are calling for a creation of NYC immigrant small business grant, ah, with parameters of eligibility...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

MOHAMMED ATTIA: ...[inaudible] on commercial rent or immigration status. Finally, the long-term solution of vending, of the vending

dilemma, is fixing this unfair system, lifting the caps on permits and licences, and allow vendors to work in a legal way. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Mohammed. Good to see you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Matthew Shapiro.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

MATTHEW SHAPIRO: [inaudible] my name is Matthew Shapiro. I'm the legal director of [inaudible]...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Matthew, it's very hard to hear you.

MATTHEW SHAPIRO: Oh, OK. Um, is that better now?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

MATTHEW SHAPIRO: OK, thanks, oh, speak into the microphone. Um, I'm the legal director of the Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center and we are the only organization citywide that provides legal and business support to New York City street vendors, and we typically get a grant through Small Business Services to do this work, and we urge the City Council to continue funding this vital

services, because as Mohammed said, um, street vendors are disproportionately impacted by the current pandemic. When you take immigrant communities and small businesses and put them together what do you get? You get street vendors. So as the comptroller said, we shouldn't cut any funding for those communities who are disproportionately impacted by this pandemic and street vendors are really the heart of that. Um, as vendors, you know, as sort of the city gets up and running hopefully in the next few months as vendors get back to work, ah, we anticipate there will be, ah, even more additional needs as, ah, they continue to experience the enforcement that they always experience there will be additional needs for social, ah, legal, and small business services. Um, and one more thing I wanted to say. Ah, as a way for the city to raise money, um, Mohammed said they could lift the cap on permits and licenses that hasn't been lifted for more than 35 years. The city could raise millions of dollars by giving out licenses and permits for street vendors and charging them for those licenses and permits. Millions of dollars. This is one way for the city to raise money when

we're trying, when, you know, everyone's looking to cut money. So why don't they do that? It would raise millions of dollars and it would put thousands of mostly immigrant workers back to work or legalize their work. So I'd like the council to really consider that, and thank you so much for your time, Chair Dromm and Chair Gibson, and for all your support, ah, for street vendors in the past and in the future.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks, Matthew.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lorcan Lawrence Otway.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

LORCAN LAWRENCE OTWAY: My name is, my name is Lorcan Otway. I own Theatre 80 St. Marks, an off-Broadway or mid-size theater, for the past 56 years. Before COVID New York lost 75 theaters in 10 years, shocking in a city defined by our theatrical traditions. We theaters employ only a few people directly. However, during the year we provide jobs for many hundreds in the productions [inaudible] shows here. In the neighborhood we create thousands of jobs in restaurants, hotels, tourism, and support industries. Our audiences represent from the highest

demographic of concerned voters. They demand independent theater as they know the difference between Disney and the socially transformative theaters, such as the Negro Ensemble Company, one of our constituent companies here at Theater [inaudible], which we, a commercial theater, brought in for free on their 50th anniversary season when their not-for-profit funding was cut. We all have unique problems. Some have rent. Some, like us, have hard money private mortgages with no protection against foreclosure. Grants and bailouts would cover all our problems and would be an investment in neighborhoods. As theaters close, thousands of jobs are lost. Worst, the definitional businesses and neighborhoods are lost. A great help would be property tax relief for buildings with theaters. Our property taxes went from $50,000 to $150,000 in 10 years. Mitigating the tax on these statistically few buildings would help keep New York a cultural world destination. We need independent theater owners' voices on the city committees to study reopening and the aftermath of COVID. When my father, an undocumented alien, built Theatre 80, in 80, ah, Theatre 80 in 1964 there were a few restaurants in

the neighborhood. Now there are some 70 restaurants on St. Mark's Place alone. Putting money into small theater comes back in the building...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

LORCAN LAWRENCE OTWAY: ...[inaudible]. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Lorcan.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be Christina Taylor, Brad Taylor, Hunter Armstrong, Aurora Flores, Heather Lubov, Tony Simone, Tara Giter, Emily Walker, Katie Denny Horowitz, and Julie Tighe. Ah, Christina Taylor.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

CHRISTINA TAYLOR: Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm Christina Taylor and today I'm testifying on behalf of the Bronx Council for Environmental Equality, BCEQ. All parks and green spaces throughout the city are serving New Yorkers every day of the week. They are in fact the only game in town. All of our parks have been brimming with visitors since the beginning of the New York PAUSE order. Both the mayor and the governor have acknowledged the importance of parks right now.

Parks like Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx are helping city dwellers sustain their mental and physical health, and yet just as visitation is up we hear that funding will be cut down. This is the time for people to experience nature with proper social distancing and safety precautions as a way to maintain a sense of normalcy and connection to the world. This is the time for the city to support its parks so that everyone, regardless of the economic status, cultural background, or ability can enjoy the clean green spaces they deserve. But the reality we face is that city funding will drastically cut parks, that parks will suffer, bathrooms will go uncleaned or will be locked entirely. Lawns will go uncut. Areas where large groups are gathering will go unpatrolled. It will not be a pretty sight. The parks will not have enough maintenance operations and horticultural staff to keep the parks looking good. The city's April 16 savings plan created vacancy reduction in the parks [inaudible] maintenance and operations for 42 positions. Seasonal employment, which is a huge part of the parks' work force may be cut by as much as 90%. Whatever work we've done so far to improve our parks will surely fall to the

side. And while all the parks will see this alarming result of the cuts, no where will it be felt more than in the Bronx, where we already receive a much smaller piece of the pie. Low-income Bronx residents do not have country homes to escape to. They do not have back yards. They have parks. Parks are essential infrastructure in a healthy city in critical spaces in a democracy. This mayor talks about equity and inclusion. With a cost of no administration in locations throughout the city, parks are the most equitable and inclusive assets of them all.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: [inaudible] in the 1970s parks were a blight instead of an oasis. We can't return to that scenario. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Brad Taylor.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Brad Taylor? Mr. Taylor? Counsel, let's move to the next and if Mr. Taylor comes on we'll, we'll go back to him.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hunter Armstrong.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

HUNTER ARMSTRONG: My name is Hunter Armstrong and I'm with the Natural Areas Conservancy. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the proposed budget. The Natural Areas Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that was formed to increase the capacity of New York City Parks and its partners to restore and manage 10,000 acres of forest and wetlands under the agency's jurisdiction. A signature project of our organization was creating the forced management framework for New York City, which we released in partnership with New York City Parks in 2018. I want to commend the leadership of Speaker Johnson and New York City Council and Mayor de Blasio in 2019, resulting in the addition of 43 million dollars to the expense funding transfer New York City Parks, including 4 million dollars to support the management of 7300 acres of forested natural areas. There are more details about the impact of this work in my written testimony. I am testify today to express the natural areas of conservancy's strong support for the second year of Play Fair. We are asking the mayor and New York City Council to add 47 million dollars to the New York City Parks expense budget to focus on keeping open

spaces safe and well maintained and on protecting jobs within New York City parks. We call for the following: 7.4 million dollars to baseline 15 Greenthumb and the 47 natural resources group staff added in the fiscal year 20 budget to care for forests, 9 million dollars to baseline 50 new park rangers and 80 new PEP positions, $520,000 to hire [inaudible] maintenance. It is imperative the support for managing New York City's 7300 acres of natural forests made in fiscal year 20 be repeated in fiscal year 21. Caring for our forests makes New York City more resilient, including cooling our city during extreme heat events and buffering our coastline areas. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. We're going to go back to Mr. Taylor. I hear that he's visible but we can't hear him. Ah, Mr. Brad Taylor? We still can't hear you. Do you have headphones on? Do you have anything on the speaker of your computer? Did you tape anything to your computer, on the top, on the sides? No? I did that once and messed my sound up. We can't hear you, Mr. Taylor. Do you have written testimony? Do you want to send the written testimony? OK, I'm very sorry.

Um, really unfortunate, you waited a long time. Apologize to you. Thank you, Mr. Taylor.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Aurora Flores.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

AURORA FLORES: Thank you. Good afternoon Chairman, council members. Thank you for the opportunity to present our concerns. I'm Aurora Flores and I'm representing the United Athletic Association, a not-for-profit advocacy group. We're representing some 16 sports organizations throughout New York City. Since 1999 we've been advocating for parks, youth, and adult recreational sports programs [inaudible]. We're also members of New Yorkers for Parks Play Fair Coalition and hope to get last year's increased budget for parks maintenance. We had come back in March precisely for additional funding for a [inaudible] field maintenance program. We had come back. We have a video, I had submitted the link. The video shows, especially for Speaker Johnson's attention, in De Witt Clinton, one of the parks in his district that had just been upgraded and it was being destroyed on the turfs. Um, you have soccer teams on baseball fields and there's a lot of chaos going on and against state guidelines soccer goals

are not being properly anchored or secured. There's a lot going on. But two months have passed. The world has turned around. We see what's going on now after this lockdown and what we came here today to do was to actually submit a proposal on trying to work with the city in working out how to reopen the parks, especially the ball fields. Um, as was said before, people are starting to come in. We have to have guidelines. Um, without the proper maintenance we have a proposal to work with some of the PEP officers, with the people that are there now that know the parks, so that when the parks become active, um, New Yorkers are safe, everyone is safe. Right now...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

AURORA FLORES: OK, people are having cabin fever. They are already setting up their own basketball hoops in the streets. So we're proposing to work with the city to have a plan, 'cause we were caught without a plan for this pandemic. We should have a plan now to open in safety, by science, by the numbers, and phases. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Ms. Flores. Next, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Heather Lubov.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

HEATHER LUBOV: Hi, thank you to Chair Dromm. I'm Heather Lubov. I'm the executive director of City Parks Foundation. We are a nonprofit and we need sports, arts, environmental education programs, and community-building programs to encourage New Yorkers to use and care for their parks and green spaces. And as you heard Christina say earlier parks are some of the most fundamentally democratic public resources that we have in our city. COVID has made really clear that parks and open spaces are essential to the physical and mental health of our city, as one of our only outlets while we are all sheltering at home. When the crisis hit we at City Parks Foundation reached out to our colleagues and we created a coalition of more than 25 open space nonprofits and I'm speaking today on behalf of all of those organizations. Our coalition members operate, maintain, and program city-owned land to help supplement private, public dollars. They raise more than 85% of their budget through private donations and earn revenue, but they now face up to 60% in revenue losses, totalling 37 million

fewer dollars for park care. A group of generous foundations recently launched the NYC Green Relief and Recovery Fund to help keep those parks open and safe. But this fund is really a challenge to the city because it simply can't replace public support for parks. Parks are going to see an unprecedented number of visitors this summer, which combined with reduced funding for maintenance will put even more stress on already overwhelmed park workers. This is why we urge you not to cut the budget at the Parks Department, but rather to support the Play Fair Coalition's request for 47 million dollars for the Parks Department to protect those jobs and ensure that our parks are green and clean. We also urge the council to renew its own Parks Equity Initiative, which addresses fairness across the city by supporting public programs run by more than 80 parks nonprofits, as well as training, resources, and intensive outreach for partnership for Parks' network of 600 volunteer donors.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

HEATHER LUBOV: We ask that you recognize that parks are essential infrastructure and they must

remain safe and well-maintained to benefit our entire city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Heather.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Tony Simone.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

TONY SIMONE: [inaudible]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Tony, we can't hear you.

TONY SIMONE: Can you hear me now?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

TONY SIMONE: Thank you, Chairman Dromm and the City Council and Speaker Johnson for allowing me to testify. My name is Tony Simone and I'm the director of external affairs for Hudson River Park Friends. As you may know, Hudson River Park Friends is an independent not-for-profit and the main fund raising and advocacy organization for Hudson River Park, of a waterfront park from Chambers to 59th Street. Our organization is part of the Parks and Open Space New York Coalition. As we all [inaudible] during this terrible pandemic parks are more than ever essential for our well-being and our mental health. We want to thank the City Council for its previous work, discretionary funding specific to

Hudson River Park's free educational environmental programs, which we hope will eventually return in the park. Ah, we join with our partners with us today to testify about the importance of adequately funding our parks. Last year the City Council, we know, with the mayor invested an historic investment of 44 million dollars to increase the expense budget for New York City parks, parks. Hudson River Park, as you may know, depends on funds, donations for maintenance, operations, and free public events, environmental education and sustainability programs. We are grateful for the council for supporting those in the past. We hope they continue to support them at the same level or more as we move forward. Um, this pandemic has caused a significant drop in donations to nonprofit partners, including Hudson River Park Friends, ah, we rely on private fund raising. Many of our events have been canceled for the year, and hope that we can continue to support these nonprofit organizations by changing some of the way, ah, we fund parks. Some recommendations as what was related Council Member Koo's letter to mayor and City Council is accelerate reimbursements for expenses already incurred on city contracts, advance

access to remaining FY20 discretionary funding, and relax restrictions to enable organizations to use this support for general operations, omit PEG cuts to New York City parks to ensure to continued maintenance of our critical public spaces. Um, we also at Hudson River Park Friends supports New York, New Yorkers for...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

TONY SIMONE: ...[inaudible] and the Play Fair Coalition's request for increasing the budget for parks. Today we ask the city to commit to an additional 200 million dollars to the preliminary budget for parks, a 100 million dollar increase in the expense budget. As we all know, Parks were essential before and more now, now more than ever. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Tara Giter.

TARA GITER: Good afternoon, Chairman. My name is...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

TARA GITER: My name is Tara Giter and I'm sharing testimony on behalf of Lynn Kelly, executive director of New York Restoration Project. We thank the council for inviting us to testify

today. NYRP joins our partners in urging the council to protect funding for New York City's parks and gardens in the city's fiscal year 2021 budget. New Yorkers need their parks and gardens now more than ever. And NYRP's work is driven by the belief that access to high-quality open space is a fundamental right of every New Yorker. As New York City's only citywide nature conservancy we manage 52 gardens and over 80 acres of city parkland across the five boroughs. NYRP staff manages and restores city parks and provide environmental education programming to thousands of New York City children each year. Many of our gardens and parks are located in the communities that have been hardest hit by COVID-19. NYRP is a proud member of the Play Fair Coalition and a founding member of the New York City Parks and Open Space Partners. Right now parks and gardens play an invaluable role in helping New Yorkers cope with COVID-19. They are the few places we can safely be outside of our homes during the quarantine and often crucial agricultural hubs providing communities in food deserts with fresh produce during this crisis. Unfortunately NYC Parks has been operating on a skeleton budget for decades and the organizations

that steward them, like NYRP, are facing a daunting fiscal crisis as a result of COVID-19's impact on our ability to fund raise. As New Yorkers flock to their local parks in great numbers the impact of COVID-19 has been compounded by increased usage and crowding and we're experiencing increased maintenance needs. Our crews are frontline workers, working tirelessly to serve the public while worrying about the health and safety of visitors, themselves, and their loved ones. The center supports the need to support the organizations that steward these essential spaces in New York City parks more broadly. The City Council support has been critical to NYRP's ability to maintain quality open spaces throughout the five boroughs, including with the Greener NYC and Parks Equity Initiatives, both essential to NYRP's educational and community programming and green space transformations. Keeping those green initiatives intact will help parks and gardens provide the outsize returns they regularly offer the communities and we urge the council to continue these initiatives. We thank the council for fighting...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

TARA GITER: ...for the Parks Department, which will meet the needs of healing communities in the months to come, and we urge you to please invest in these treasured and now essential parts of the city's recovery. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Emily Walker.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

EMILY WALKER: Good afternoon. My name is Emily Walker and I'm the director of outreach and programs at New Yorkers for Parks. NY for P is a founding member of the Play Fair Coalition, which includes over 250 organizations citywide, many [inaudible]. We want to thank Chair Dromm and the Committee on Finance for allowing us to speak about the FY21 expense budget today. The council's leadership last year secured everyday improvements for our parks, community gardens, and natural areas with the historic addition of 44 million to the FY20 expense budget. We're grateful for the benefits that funding provided to our [inaudible] spaces last year. Today we respectfully request the inclusion of an additional 47 million for Parks in the upcoming FY21 expense budget. This funding will ensure that our parks remain safe, well-maintained, and provide

equitable health environmental benefits to communities across the city at a time when they are arguably more important than ever. We want to note that Parks worker are deemed essential in response to the COVID-19 crisis. They have been putting themselves on the line daily to keep our parks clean and safe during this challenging time. As the council knows, hundreds of these dedicated professionals do not have job security beyond June 30. The FY20 funding added by the council created 342 new [inaudible] plans for parks last year and we strongly believe that these hard-working New Yorkers deserve the guarantee of a job on July 1. Our coalition's ask includes 26.4 million dollars to stabilize these 342 positions, which includes city park workers, gardeners, PEP officers, urban park rangers, and [inaudible] outreach. The full details of our platform are attached to our written testimony today. We also want to note that in the last fiscal year Parks received slightly more than 0.6% of the entire city operating budget and the PEG savings so far announced by the city, which total over 2.1 billion, Parks has been asked to bear 61.3 million so far, which represents nearly 3% of the entire

[inaudible] all agencies. We recognize this is a challenging time for NYC's budget. However, this crisis has also highlighted the essential role that parks play for our city. We are deeply concerned that Parks is being asked to bear a disproportionate...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

EMILY WALKER: ...amount of the citywide savings while also being asked to remain open, clean, and safe for public use during this crisis, without the resources they need to do so. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Katie Denny Horowitz.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

KATIE DENNY HOROWITZ: Hey, good afternoon. Um, I want to thank everyone on the City Council and at Parks who are designating today, ah, Go Green for Parkies Day, so I'm wearing my green today. Um, I'm Katie Denny Horowitz, ah, executive director of the North Brooklyn Parks Alliance. Ah, we're a nonprofit that's dedicated to creating an equitable, accessible, and vibrant park system, specifically in the neighborhoods of Green Point and [inaudible]. Um, we echo the strong sentiment of our Parks partners to reinstate the essential New York

City Parks funding that will keep our parks and open spaces up to a standard that New York City and New Yorkers deserve. The current pandemic has brought to the forefront the essential roles of our parks, which offers critical and unparalleled opportunities for physical and mental health, ah, during the current situation. Ah, we stand with New Yorkers for Parks to request the inclusion of an additional 47 million dollars for New York City parks in the upcoming fiscal 21 budget, as detailed in the Play Fair campaign that Emily just eloquently laid out. Um, but also here in north Brooklyn our community is historically underserved in the amount of parkland available to our residents. We're grateful to the efforts of this administration and the City Council, specifically our council member, Steve Levin, to acquire additional land for the purpose of open space, including ah, ah, completing the vision for a 27-acre Bushwick Inlet Park, ah, in the Williamsburg, on the border of Green Point. Despite the acquisition of the final park parcel in 2016, however, ah, there is currently no funding allocated to develop that parcel or to remove the 258,400 square foot storage facility, formerly known as City

Storage, that sits on top of the current parkland and acts as a massive barrier between our community and the East River. At a time when demand for open space is at an all-time high, we request that funding for the future phase of Bushwick Inlet Park, including the immediate removal of the City Storage building, be allocated in the current fiscal 21 budget. In addition to providing the...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

KATIE DENNY HOROWITZ: ...[inaudible] north Brooklyn community a waterfront park that was promised as part of the 2005 rezoning, the removal of the abandoned building will be a symbol of New York City's resilience, evolution, and commitment to environmental justice, and I want to thank you for your time today.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Julie Tighe.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

JULIE TIGHE: Good afternoon. My name is Julie Tighe. I'm president of the New York League of Conservation Voters. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Too frequently government seems to view the environment as a luxury that is cut early and often when the going gets tough. And while this

crisis will deeply impact the way the city functions, climate change still threatens and pollution harms families and children. New York City must maintain programs that promote clean air, protect green spaces, and mitigate climate change by reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions. Maintaining open space funding is one of our top priorities. Now more than ever parks provide a crucial outlet for New Yorkers. As a founding member of the Play Fair Coalition, NYLCV requests an additional 47 million dollars for parks in the expense budget to ensure parks are safe and well-maintained, building on the historic investment the council made in 2019. Every day parks workers put their lives on the line and more than 300 of them have no job security past June 30, and they deserve a job guarantee on July 1. Our full list of funding request is in our written testimony. We appreciate the work the Sanitation Department has done in this crisis to keep our streets clean and free of trash. However, it is heartbreaking to see drastic cuts to recycling programs when the city has repeatedly set aside its zero waste by 2030 goal, which will have lasting effects, as we know, from past crises. Backtracking on recycling will make it

impossible to reach zero waste within the next 10 years. If the city suspends curbside organic waste collection for the next year we must have at least three composting drop-off sites for community districts and set a deadline for mandatory citywide curbside collection. We're also concerned about proposed cuts to DOT's Vision Zero, Green Wave plan, and Better Bus programs. Last year the second-most cyclist fatalities since record keeping began were seen. We're seeing a big uptick in biking, which will only increase as the city reopens. New Yorkers should not have to decide if they to want to risk getting sick or being struck by a vehicle. They deserve open streets to feel safe on their bikes, scooters, and feet. And while traffic congestion is currently down, we worry that more people will drive to work to avoid the mass transit. Losing the innovative...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JULIE TIGHE: ...[inaudible] program with transportation benefits for years is counter to our goal of create a more equitable city. We urge you to reinstate funding for these programs to keep New Yorkers safe. We understand that New York City is in

a vulnerable state, but the environment shouldn't be the first on the chopping block. As the climate crisis intensifies we will look back to moments like this to see if we decided to fight for the environment. If we improve transportation, reduce emissions, reduce waste, and protect our green spaces we'll be ready when the next crisis comes. Thank you again.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Julie.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be Beatriz Diaz Taveras, MJ Okma, Maria Lizardo, Nora Moran, Shijad Padry, Reg Calcagno, Melissa Sklarz, Aaron Siperstein, and Caitlyn Andrews.

UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible] to the foundation, I know that early on there was a lot of conversation around...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVERAS: Hello.

UNIDENTIFIED: I'm sorry.

BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVERAS: I'm Beatriz Diaz Taveras, the executive director of Catholic Charities Community Services. Good afternoon, Chairman Dromm and members of the New York City Council Committee on

Finance. I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding the work of Catholic Charities [inaudible] social services and the challenges we will face in the long term as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on our economy, our clients, and our city. As you know, for over 70 years Catholic Charities Community Services has provided comprehensive professional human services to vulnerable low-income city residents in the poorest communities in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island. But the impact of COVID-19 on the communities we serve, particularly immigrants and community of color has been and will be harassment, disproportionate, and lasting. Even before the pandemic our clients reported high levels of anxiety, distress, uncertainty, instability in family life, economic security, lack of income, and food insecurity. This combination has effectively acted as pre-existing condition, intensifying the health, social, economic, and financial challenges that with each day has become increasingly dire. Compounding the challenges facing this community is that their members are more likely to have essential jobs that put them on the front line of the war against the

virus, holding positions such as healthcare professionals, grocery clerks, delivery truck drivers, or day laborers who are increasingly putting their livelihoods at risk for contracting the virus, particularly because they're in a...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVERAS: ...[inaudible] business. My two minutes are up?

UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVERAS: Can I just say we're advocating for SYEP. We're advocating for summer daycare. Our children need a place to go this summer. We also think that we need work force development. We need to be able to provide instructions to our, to our, ah, lower-income workers who are going to need so much more. We also need funding for disaster case management so that we could help our vulnerable New Yorkers. Thank you, and Chairman Vanessa Gibson we thank you also for your support of our agency and our programs.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Beatriz. Keep up the good work. Thank you.

BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVERAS: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: MJ Okma.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

MJ OKMA: Good afternoon. My name is MJ Okma, with the Human Services Council, a membership organization representing over 170 human services providers in New York City. While last year's indirect investment was an important step forward [inaudible], um, more needs to be done to address the massive crisis of underfunded human services contracts, especially now that providers are taking on additional costs related to COVID-19. City contracts pay only 80 cents on the dollar of programs' costs. This funding gap has directly resulted in city contracted human services work force being some of the lowest-compensated workers in our city's economy. These workers are now on the front lines of COVID-19 and they need your support. We are asking the council to commitment to providing a 3% COLA on the personal service line of all human services contracts at a cost of 48 million. The previous COLA is set to expire at the end of fiscal year 2020 and we must not allow it to be stripped away from these essential workers. Further, we ask the City Council to work with the [inaudible] to secure funding for retroactive incentive pay for all

1 human services workers who have been unable to do
2 their essential jobs remotely. Members of the
3 council have made powerful statements about the need
4 to support our essential workers. Ensuring the COLA
5 is renewed and fighting together to secure incentive
6 pay for this work force will help make sure those
7 values are solidified in the budget. Additionally,
8 we ask for assurance that no bills pass the City
9 Council that impose unfunded mandates on this sector,
10 including 1918 and 1926, unless they are backed with
11 immediate funding on city contracts. As well, the
12 commitment that the city's budget deficit is not
13 bridged with across-the-board cuts to human services.
14 Doing so this fiscal year will only strip services
15 away from communities who have already been the
16 hardest hit by this pandemic due to structural
17 racism, ablism, and income inequality. It is vital
18 for our city's recovery that human services providers
19 have a direct seat at the table to discuss the fiscal
20 year 21 budget and beyond. Once again, I want to
21 thank you for the indirect investment, which has been
22 rolling out on schedule. The continued
23 implementation of this funding is critical. Thank
24 you for this [inaudible] and providing me with this
25

opportunity to testify. There is more information about all these priorities...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MJ OKMA: ...[inaudible] written testimony.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thank you.

MJ OKMA: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Maria Lizardo.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

MARIA LIZARDO: Ah, hi. Good afternoon, Speaker Johnson, Council Member Dromm and Gibson. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Maria Lizardo. I'm the executive director at Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, NMIC. We're a community-based settlement house founded in 1979. Our mission is to serve as a positive change [inaudible] people in our community in the past to secure [inaudible]. We do this through the division of legal services, community organizing, education and career services, social services, and [inaudible], and we serve 14,000 community members a year. NMIC is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by shifting to remote service provision to continue

providing critical community support in response to our current public health crisis. We operationalize four emergency hotlines in the areas that have seen drastic increases as the city continues to respond to COVID-19. Our hotlines are able to provide in Spanish and English and they're focused on benefits, housing, immigration, and unemployment services. In addition to the new hotline, NMIC has implemented a food distribution and cash assistance program in response to the evolving crisis. NMIC's ability to pivot to remote services to continue meeting committee members' needs has been lifesaving for New Yorkers like Teresa, who recently contacted us via NMIC's unemployment hotline with a question about her benefits after losing her job due to COVID. She didn't, she did not identify as a victim of intimate partner violence, but the attorney staff staffing the hotline homed on the details of her story, where she suspected her husband may have hacked her username and password to the Department of Labor website. Teresa was referred to NMIC's domestic violence project, where we did a full assessment and realized that she had been recently assaulted by her partner, who then fled the home. She called 911, but no

arrest has been made. Teresa felt frightened, vulnerable, confused. Our counselor continued to work with her and they realized that, um, in addition her bank account, her phone had been compromised. [inaudible] called her. Teresa used a location map and noticed that her husband...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARIA LIZARDO: ...[inaudible]. Our ask is that now in the midst of this crisis that the human services sector be considered as essential as it always has been and that we restore funding in fiscal year 21 for all discretionary and city contracts and that you allow us the maximum flexibility to be able to meet the emerging needs as we will see come out of this crisis. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Maria.

MARIA LIZARDO: Thank you, Council Member Gibson.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Nora Moran.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

NORA MORAN: Thank you so much, ah, Chairs Dromm and Gibson for hosting this hearing. My name is Nora Moran and I'm the director of policy and advocacy at United Neighborhood Houses. We represent

New York City's 40 settlement houses. My written testimony has a lot of detail, but I'm just gonna highlight three key points. Um, first, ah the proposed cuts to Beacon, ah, Beacons, NYCHA Cornerstones, COMPASS, Sonic, and the Summer Youth Employment Program are fully unacceptable and will result in nearly 200,000 young people having absolutely no support this summer, ah, as well as massive layoffs for the staff who have been running many of these programs virtually for the last few weeks, supporting young people. Um, we need to make sure that we have summer programs for children and, ah, to support their social emotional needs, um, and really to help them prepare, ah, for return to school in the fall. We really look to the council to help us push back against these cuts and make sure that there are summer programs in place. Um, second, senior hunger has emerged as a key need during COVID-19. Settlement houses have been filling the gaps where the city's emergency senior meal programs have failed. Um, one program that has continued successfully during all of this is the DFTA home-delivered meals program. Our members with those contracts have reported a 20% to 30% increase in

demand, but no new funding. We're requesting an additional 26 million dollars to help stabilize this program and ensure that emergency room meals can continue, and we think that this funding, ah, could be billed to FEMA. It's also crucial that the RFP that's out right now for home-delivered meals that's due on June 1 be postponed indefinitely. A pandemic is not a time to issue a new procurement to do a massive overhaul of a program, especially when that's doing essential work of providing senior meals. And finally settlement houses have been doing essential work across the city these past few months, like providing emergency food and staffing regional enrichment centers. This work is really challenging. They're risking their health. Um, and we've seen many settlement house workers and clients get sick from COVID-19 and even pass away. Um, because of all this we cannot balance this budget on the backs of poor people by just simply cutting human services.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

NORA MORAN: Doing so will only cut supports for people who are experiencing poverty, for people of color who are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. We know that there's a budget

2 deficit, but the answer can't just be cuts to human
3 services and not looking, ah, other city agencies or
4 at revenue options. Um, settlement houses are really
5 on the front lines of this pandemic and they need the
6 city's support now more than ever. Thank you.
7 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Nora.
8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Padry?
9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
10 SHIJAD PADRY: [inaudible] the speaker
11 and both chairs [inaudible]...
12 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Hi.
13 SHIJAD PADRY: Are you able to hear me?
14 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes, we hear you.
15 SHIJAD PADRY: Hi, Chair Gibson, and also
16 the former legislative counsel who has sat through
17 many hours of hearings. I want to thank the staff
18 the putting this together. I think it's gone off
19 very seamlessly, um, and my hat tip to all. I want
20 to start with the big picture, um, ah, sort of
21 perspective. I'm the chief advocacy officer for the
22 LGBT [inaudible] in New York City. We offer robust
23 services to every member of the community, including
24 many folks from the tri-state area. But what you are
25 hearing today over these many hours of hearings is

clear. The people most impacted by a loss of funding or a loss of services or a loss of community are NY's, ah, low-income New Yorkers who tend to be people of color and then when we compound those identities around race with other identities such as gender identity, um, your housing status, your, ah, sexual orientation, you're only further suppressed in what you're able to access at this time. The center has been, um, nimble and very fortunate to move all of our services online, including new online virtual groups that we've created to [inaudible] community. We've seen a 50% increase in service provision, or, I'm sorry, in requests and subsequent provision, ah, since we have been virtual, ah, as per the governor's orders, ah, about two-and-a-half months ago at this point. We continue to work with, ah, something that I think is very important to highlight, other organizations who are also providing essential services in the city, because we recognize, ah, similar to my colleague, Maria, talking about the essential services that are being provided by many of the nonprofits on today's, ah, ah, Zoom hearing, we continue to ask that the council lead in the way that it has nationally by providing at a minimum

restoration funding for organizations across the city who are serving our most, ah, communities most in need and most essential services that are being provided by these nonprofits. New York continues to fund these efforts and we ask that you, ah...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

SHIJAD PADRY: ... continue to prioritize, prioritize the funding that's offered to these nonprofits, many colleagues across the organizations recognizing that, ah, in our space LGBT New Yorkers, particularly queer and trans people of color are most deeply impacted by this and we don't want to have to play the oppression Olympics, um, by having to vie for funding against each other, but really ask that the council prioritize all of the needs that are being heard today and do their very best to restore funding, if not increase funding, for organizations across the city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thank you.

SHIJAD PADRY: Take care.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Reg Calcagno.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

REG CALCAGNO: [inaudible] my, OK, thank you. Ah, good afternoon. My name is Reg Calcagno. I'm testifying on behalf of the center, the LGBTQ Center. This testimony will focus on key areas where the center is requesting funding and the areas where we are urging the City Council to negotiate an adopted budget that will continue to support the essential services that the center provides to the LGBTQ community at current, ah, and we are requesting, um, as my colleague said, ah, to continue services across the board. We are seeking, um, funding for the LGBTQ community crisis intervention program. This funding allows us to provide frontline support, such as referrals, intake services, and/or service navigation to thousands of community members each month. We have seen a significant, ah, increase in services since the closing, um, and have been, as my colleague, Ms. Padry, said, ah, able to provide that seamlessly despite moving completely online and virtual. We are also seeking funding for the LGBTQ youth in poverty. These programs increase, um, LGBTQ youth academic and employment outlooks, build self-esteem, inform identity politics, and break the cycle of substance abuse and reduce the likelihood of being

unstably housed, ultimately improving the future of LGBTQ youth of color, their potential, and reducing their reliance on government services. We are also seeking funding for an [inaudible]. The renewal of funding, ah, will support our efforts to formally catalogue and properly maintain our important collection of thousands of LGBT archived files, books, and media via our full-time staff member, as well as continue to document the rich history of the community that we received, especially in light of COVID-19 [inaudible] quarantine, ah, collection that is going on. The trans equity initiative funding supports the center's economic justice initiatives programming and the center applies intersectional lenses to the strategies implemented, which are designed to address...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

REG CALCAGNO: ...emerging needs, ah, ah, thank you so much, and we request continued funding. Thank you so much for convening this.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Reg.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ah, just finish out. Did you have something more to say about the transgender equity?

REG CALCAGNO: Ah, yes, just that, ah, these, the, the funding is designed to address the emerging needs of economically excluded communities by increasing access to affirming resources, encouraging mutual systems of support, and generating new opportunities to create connected community pathways for economic stability for, for TGNC and nonbinary community.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, so thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Melissa Sklarz.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

MELISSA SKLARZ: Thank you, um, so good afternoon. My name Melissa Sklarz. I'm the senior government relations strategist at SAGE, oldest and largest organization dedicated to improve the lives of LGBT elders, and we are citywide. Thank you, Chairman Dromm, Chairperson Gibson, ah, thank you, Speaker Johnson, our friends in the council and our fierce champion of aging here in New York, Margaret Chin. SAGE, um, and our participants are at the epicenter of COVID. Take a look at age. Our participants are over the age of 60 with health and HIV, poverty, isolation, thin support networks, and

discrimination. And in spite of all that, SAGE is meeting all those problems. We are providing housing for participants, ah, with Stonewall House in Brooklyn and the soon-to-be-built project in Crotona Park in the Bronx. We are providing food, virtual programming, wellness calls. We have made 7000 phone calls to 3000 elders and continue to do it in conjunction with DFTA. We now have our SAGE Connect program, which is a way to get our LGBTQ community to help out and connect with people to avoid isolation in the time of COVID. We've had 40 years of service and achievement behind us, but COVID is forcing a shift in capacity and resources. My ask today is the restoration of support from our friends in the City Council. We have SAGE centers in the Bronx, in Staten Island, midtown, Harlem, and of course our new housing project in Brooklyn in Fort Greene in Stonewall House. All have SAGE centers providing case management, mental health, housing services, providing navigation for people of color. As people age it's important that they understand that all, ah, the access to all the different resources that are available. You know, we're, we're, we're very grateful to our friends in the council.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

MELISSA SKLARZ: LGBT elders deserve to, ah, age with dignity and respect, and no better friends can do that here in New York. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Melissa.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Aaron Siperstein.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

AARON SIPERSTEIN: I just wanted to thank the speaker and Chairs Dromm and Gibson for giving me the opportunity. I'm Aaron Siperstein. I'm the managing director of legal and external affairs for Met Council. Many of you, the council members, know what Met Council has been doing for many years, um, especially since COVID-19 has hit us. Ah, we've seen an increase in the need for food. We saw a 31% increase in demand for emergency food assistance. What we did was immediately we expended our warehouses. We added warehouses. We started a program with Uber to be able to start serving and bringing people deliveries. We started with 500. Now we're doing a thousand every other week. That was, that was just our food pantries, Holocaust survivors. Now we have, ah, crisis intervention, which is one of our main initiatives, called the

Access to Critical Senior Services, where we are helping people with their mortgages and their utilities and their rents and, and it's a great way for us to be able to help them take care of those bills and then speak to them about the other slew of social services that we do. We have seen an increase in domestic violence services. We've filled out so many different applications, including SNAP, ah, that we've seen an increase, and we have a great tax prep program, which able us to bring money into people's pockets. We go ahead and do this earned income tax credit. We started doing that virtually, not only in our 16, ah, JCC, Jewish Community Councils, but all over the city. Um, we ask from the council, first, a, a big thank-you because we couldn't do our work without the partners in government, especially the City Council, but to be able to, you know, we're talking about cuts, you know, not-for-profits. We really should be talking about that we are...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

AARON SIPERSTEIN: ...one of the first responders and that maybe some increases to us is appropriate. Thank you very much for listening.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ah, Aaron, I just want to thank you and I want to thank Met Council.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You delivered five pallets of food to my district last week, ah, to our Muslim community. The food was appropriate, halal appropriate. You're on Metropolitan Council, on Jewish Poverty. I really appreciate that very, very much. Ah, you are doing an outstanding job with the food deliveries.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes. Thank you, Aaron. Thanks, Met Council.

AARON SIPERSTEIN: Thank you very much for that. And you know, whenever you need anything you, you email me and we take care of it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: I will call [laughs].

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Caitlyn Andrews.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

CAITLYN ANDREWS: Hi, my name is Caitlyn Andrews. I'm the director of public policy at Live On New York. And what a fabulous panel to be a part of here with so many great speakers. Um, Live On New York, we have a base of more than 100 community-based

organizations in every community district throughout the five boroughs. I want to say really clearly, seniors are the most at risk to COVID-19. Their funding should not be at risk, too. Just this past Tuesday, Live On held our 25th annual aging advocacy day. We had more than 200 individuals registered to participate and I'm sure many of the council members participated in social media or got called. Um, thank you for that, we appreciate it. While we couldn't be on the steps of City Hall, the calls for support somehow felt louder and more clear than ever. One provider shared a story of fielding a call from a senior participant whose food supply had run out, a call that was not unfamiliar during this time. Another confided that their organization has lost more than 40 clients during this time. Their coworkers were grieving. The participants have also shared messages of how essential their teams have proven. With every point made, the need for increased support from the city became clear. The following key investments need to be made to ensure that this support continues. 26.2 million dollars for the home-delivered meal system as has been championed by Council Member Margaret Chin. This is

due to increased demand and years of underfunding, 20% below the national average. The city's nonprofits are on the brink of insolvency and this cannot continue. Additionally, we need to ensure that the drivers on the frontline receive the incentive pay that they deserve. Further, there is an RFP out for this proposal and we believe that that should be delayed during this time, given that it is a global pandemic and providers are really focused on meeting the need. Additionally, in 2017 senior centers were promised 10 million dollars by FY21...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

CAITLYN ANDREWS: ...for their budgets. That money is still not in the budget. A promise made in 2017 to seniors should be a promise kept. We believe that should be included, as well as a restoration of all the one-time senior services funds that don't appear to be a cut, but they are a cut to programs across the city. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I know that Margaret Chin, has everybody from Live On New York spoken, or are you the only one?

CAITLYN ANDREWS: Just me, yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, Margaret Chin did want to make some comments. Council Member Margaret Chin, chair of the Aging Committee.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Um, thank you to, thank you to all the human service, um, advocates and the senior service advocate, um, who are participating in this budget hearing. We hear you. We agree with you. We support you. Because we got to make sure the safety net are protected and we also have to make sure that our senior center, our human services, nonprofit organizations remain whole. We don't want this crisis to destroy lives and destroy organization that has been serving our community, people in need, for so many years. That's why we're committed to make sure that you are kept whole. And that's why with my colleague, especially with Chair Dromm, um, our speaker, Chair Gibson, we're gonna fight very hard to make sure that funding goes to the seniors and human services sector. Because you have been doing such great work during this pandemic. I mean, you started virtually programming, you're the one that was delivering meals to our senior, taking

care of our senior, and the city needs to learn from you. And I think with some of the summer program we really encourage you to reach out, ah, to the council, to the council member, ah, let us know what your ideas are, suggestions that we don't want the administration to dictate, ah, that we're not gonna have summer program, we're not gonna have SYEP. That's unacceptable. So I really wanted to thank you for all your hard work and know that we are on your side in this fight. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, ah, chair, ah, Chin, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We're gonna circle back to Dr. Cary Goodman. Um, I believe his audio issues have been resolved.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

DR. CARY GOODMAN: Thank you very much. Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

DR. CARY GOODMAN: Wonderful. I just want to say a special greeting to, ah, my City Council member, Vanessa Gibson. Chair Gibson, good to hear and see you, ah, on behalf of our neighborhood. I represent, as you can tell from my

cap, ah, the, um, businesses around Yankee Stadium. There are 152 of them, who received absolutely zero from New York City's Small Business Department in terms of grants and loans to fight the COVID crisis. Zero. So I'm here to argue on their behalf, and I think I have a formula whereby the council can not only address the needs of our small businesses, but the entire city. Here's how it goes. New York City has given one trillion dollars in tax abatements to those across the city, including and especially the New York Yankees. If the New York Yankees were paying property taxes, just like our small businesses, the bars and the retail shops in our neighborhood, they would be [inaudible] over one billion dollars to the local economy. They're not. They pay no real estate taxes. And, as I said, that's true of businesses across the city for one trillion dollars. So if you want to know how to save parks, rescind the property tax abatements. You want to know how to save SYEP? Rescind the property tax abatements. So, ah, I think, listening to Chair Dromm yesterday at the SBS program, we learned that the city has no plan whatsoever to provide money for the small businesses through those grants and loans

that were given this year in next year's budget. That should not stand. It should be about a hundred million dollars and it should go to those businesses in the neighborhoods that are most severely affected, especially as we've come to learn the South Bronx, who's [inaudible] most oppressed, ah...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

DR. CARY GOODMAN: ...[inaudible]. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you. Counsel?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we have comments from, um, Council Member Rosenthal.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Hi, ah, Dr. Goodman, I hear your voice. I don't see your face.

DR. CARY GOODMAN: [inaudible]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: But it was good to hear to your voice.

DR. CARY GOODMAN: You know what, I'm a tech, I'm a techno dinosaur, Council Member Rosenthal.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Ah, you're not alone.

DR. CARY GOODMAN: [inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I wanted to thank you for raising these points. Ah, you know, I'm definitely beating the drum and this point about Madison Square Garden is galling that we're not collecting taxes there. I'm with you 100%. You know, one of the challenges for the city is these things are not in the control of the city. You know, it's really the governor and the state that controls, ah, the tax abatements, taxes, um, whether or not we can, you know, put a tax on one thing or another. I mean, I think we should be taxing stock deals, bonds deals, derivatives. That, that law is actually on the books, but the, but every year the money is just given back to, to the people who make money off of those deals. So, um, you know, the governor could do these things that would give us the money to address these issues for sure and I just wanted to thank you for that, raising it, and urge you to take it to your state representatives and, and to the governor. This is absolutely what we need at this time. Thank you very much, Chair Dromm, for giving me a moment to say hello.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Chair Gibson has some remarks.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ah, just very quickly. Thank you, Council Member Rosenthal. Thank you, Dr. Cary Goodman. I just wanted to go on record and, ah, expressing our appreciation to you as the executive director of our 161st Street Business Improvement District, really for advocacy and strong leadership on behalf of all the merchants and businesses around Yankee Stadium, along 161 and River Avenue, ah, understanding that even before COVID we were dealing with something very challenging in that area where a new deal between Nike and major league baseball would have excluded a number of our businesses that would have caused them to lay off 80% of their staff as well as a loss of income. Um, and then when COVID hit they were even more devastated. So I appreciate all of your work and everything you're doing with SBS to ensure that Bronx businesses get access to grants and loans and really rebuilding. We don't what the immediate future in terms of the Yankee season would need with MLB. We're not sure just yet. There's talk about a truncated season. But nonetheless we have to do everything possible to help them, and I wanted to thank you and your team, ah, the youth ambassadors on 161st Street, a lot of

the efforts that you have undertaken on behalf of our businesses. So we have a lot of work to do. But, thank you, Dr. Goodman, for sharing your concerns and raising that to the council at this time. Thank you so much, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Of course. Thank you. Let's go to our next panelist, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I will now call our next panel, which will be Taj Sutton, Rebecca Park, Diana Ramirez, Jessatuon Balaboday, Joel Solo, Wesley Guzman, Josh Melendez, Tenzen Chofel, and Calvin Huber. Taj Sutton.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

TAJ SUTTON: Hi everyone, can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

TAJ SUTTON: Fantastic. Um, thank you so much for your time, um, to the chairs and the council members. We are deeply appreciative and I feel like we've all been on 4000 calls a day...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [laughs]

TAJ SUTTON: ...but we all know that each call is important and essential. Um, I thank everyone who waited around, like myself, you know,

just to make sure that these voices were heard. Um, I want to echo my comrades who are advocating, particularly around our school settlement associations, our neighborhood organizations that are based in our school communities, because they're actually supporting the most vulnerable, which we've heard from lots of organizations. Um, in particular, I know in my community, District 14, I'm the community education council president and we see the labor that St. Nick's Alliance, Mercy Settlement, El Fuente, and [inaudible] are doing on the ground all day, every day, and [inaudible] usual way, projects popping up all over. Um, so I want to reiterate that necessity of summer youth programming and our school organizations really, it just cannot be stressed enough. I also want to caution, there's a lot of people talking about green space. Um, and I'm really happy to hear that conversation happening, but I'm deeply concerned that if we talk about opening parks and schools with green space without talking about making sure that it's community members in those spaces enforcing our social distancing and what we're going to do with the conversions of community spaces being opened and disparate policing and if we don't

2 have something in place for our young people that is
3 going to lead to disaster. And so when we look at
4 the budget and how much the NYPD continues to get
5 while our school budgets and our organizational
6 budgets are slashed, it really just doesn't make
7 sense to prioritize policing and the criminalization
8 of our community members who are [inaudible] most
9 vulnerable rather than our youth, our elders, our
10 schools, our afterschools, our daycare centers, and
11 things of that nature. We also...
12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.
13 TAJ SUTTON: ...[inaudible] starting the
14 economy and we can't do that without our childcare
15 centers. So I just want to continue to implore that
16 the council restore funding for our summer youth
17 program, for our afterschool, for our summer school,
18 for enrichment, for our young people, and take a hard
19 look at what we can divest from, which I strongly
20 believe includes policing. It's, we, I think that we
21 need more than that and, and our community can
22 enforce our social distancing in a way that is safer
23 for everyone that lives in our communities. Thank
24 you.
25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rebecca Park.

REBECCA PARK: Hi, my name is...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

REBECCA PARK: ...Rebecca Park and I'm a proud New York City public school teacher at Leaders High School in Bensonhurst, a few blocks away from Council Member Treyger's district office. As a government teacher, I strive to empower my students to believe that they have a role to play and that it is worth participating in the government, especially the city government. If the council votes yes on the mayor's current proposed budget, how am I supposed to tell them that their city government cares about them, that in a pandemic, in the midst of a crisis that has isolated and traumatized them and denied them their right to a full and normal education, that the city chose to increase funding for the institutions that criminalize them while taking away from those resources that nourish and educate and value them? In solidarity with my colleagues, my students, and families across the city, I demand a restorative budget that values healing over policing. I demand that the city funds social workers and counselors and teachers and nurses and our invaluable maintenance staff, that you restore funding for the

Summer Youth Employment Program, a lifeline of opportunity for students like mine. Our budget crisis is real, but the city must instead tackle it with a hiring freeze and reduce funding for the NYPD, an institution sorely ill-equipped to respond to this crisis. How many more videos of police officers brutalizing our neighbors do we need to see? Police are not the solution. Teachers don't need empty tweets of appreciation. If you really believe we're essential workers, as this crisis has shown day in and day out, we need resources and staff to make sure students can be as healthy and happy and whole as possible, including additional resources to address the trauma and the economic fallout that's accelerating by the day. A divesting from our students now will tell them that the government does not care about them. Furthermore, these cuts to education and the SYEP and our youth services will only lead to more pain and more trauma and more budget programs down the line. I really hope you do the right thing, and I also urge all City Council members, like [inaudible] recently said, to call on our state legislature to consider revenue-raising options when they return on Tuesday. We have

multiple ways out of this crisis and none of them include cutting education. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Diana Ramirez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

DIANA RAMIREZ: Hello, council members. My name is Diana Ramirez. I'm a student at High School for Environmental Studies and a member of Sisters in Strength and Girls for Gender Equity, where I work with a million people to advocate and start conversations about different social issues that have affected the communities we know of or a part of. Everyone must be able to feel safe in school and outside of school. The budget plans to cut funding to public schools cut SYEP and summer programming for youth while protecting the NYPD from budget cuts. [inaudible] parents rely on youth for financial income, especially now since a lot of parents are unable to work. SYEP was a way for young people to get out of their home environments, which may be emotionally draining and unsafe. Students are stressed enough as it is with their own issues to deal with. All my learning has negatively impacted our mental health, which is important for us to

access mental health, though many are unable to. I am about to be a senior, which means more pressure in schools, with limited college access programs just like my own that only has one college counselor. Going back to school we'll already be surrounded by [inaudible] and triggering of feelings, which will not be helped with more police presence in school. This is not the time to make cuts to programs that support young people. We need access to any sorts of income to allow parents who are unable to access [inaudible]. We need money for necessities and also for self-care and joy. In regards to school, we need resources like counselors, [inaudible] coordinators, and college counselors. COVID-19 has impacted my access to college preparation because our one college counselor is overwhelmed and [inaudible], which adds onto stress. We all deserve the need to feel safe. We need to direct this funding towards providing more [inaudible] and [inaudible] information to communities. We should be able to invest into the education for the upcoming school year than to have people triggered by police presence. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jessatuon Balaboday.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

JESSATUON BALABODAY: Good afternoon, good afternoon, council members. My name is Jessatuon Balaboday. I am a freshman at Townsend Harris High School and a youth leader at the Rockaway Youth Task Force and, and Dignity in Schools campaign. Today my concern is the cancellation of the Summer Youth Employment Program and the budget cuts concerning the Department of Education. The decision to cut 75,000 jobs from New York City youth is careless at best and cruel at worst. SYEP plays an important role in my community, Far Rockaway. Hundreds of youth, including myself, participated last year. The source of income that it provides my community is important, being that the majority of residents live below the poverty line. This pandemic has spurred an economic drop in my community and the mayor and City Council's decision to cancel SYEP's [inaudible]. Additionally, the large cuts made to the DOE further displays the city's disregard to youth, especially youth of color, because we all know schools, like the historically under-funded schools in the Rockaways are the ones who will be hit by, hit the hardest by these cuts. It's bad enough that

according to *New York Times* the Rockaways, 11691 and 11692, are leading in COVID cases and deaths in New York City. But to know that a budget to fund counselors and social workers in our schools is not being prioritized disappoints me. What the youth in my community and youth in other poor communities need is security and a source of income this summer, an alternative to summer youth, and they need their schools' counseling and restorative justice practices to be properly funded when they return this year. What is not going to help is police officers harassing black and brown students in the hallways. Yet those are the departments that have seen the least cuts. In fact, school safety is set to be receiving additional funding, which is ridiculous. This further shows that the city prioritizes policing youth of color over providing mental support. Lack of income, mental support, and over-policing will prime vulnerable youth of, to the school to prison pipeline. I ask the committee to, I ask the committee to consider all these things...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

JESSATUON BALABODAY: ...and work to provide, I ask the committee to consider all these

1 things and work to provide an alternative to SYEP and
2 plan and implement improved mental health programs
3 for our vulnerable youth next year. Thank you.
4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Joel Solo.
6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
7 JOEL SOLO: Ah, good afternoon. Ah,
8 thank you, Council. My name is Joel. I'm a special
9 education teacher at West Side High School, a
10 transfer school, and a member of Teachers Unite. Um,
11 I'm here today because I am tired. My students are
12 tired. Their children and their parents are tired.
13 We are all struggling with trauma, grief, isolation,
14 and deep uncertainty about the future. As it stands,
15 Mayor de Blasio's proposed budget for education
16 represents a vision of the future where the city's
17 response to our grief is more money for metal
18 detectors, security cameras, and handcuffs, and fewer
19 minutes each day that I can spend tending to my
20 students' needs, concerns, and learning. We have to
21 do better. Mayor de Blasio's proposed budget cuts,
22 proposed budget cuts education by 641 million dollars
23 in the next year. That's 2800% more than it cuts
24 policing. The mayor's proposal would not fill vacant
25

positions for teachers or social workers who retire, but it would for police officers and would actually slight increase officer head count. At my school that would translate to fewer teachers and counselors as my colleagues retire exhausted and are not replace. This in turn leads to larger class sizes and caseloads for social workers. It takes time to teach. It takes time to get to know students as human beings, and it takes time to get underneath the I'm doing OK and everything is all right to the reality of how our students are doing. My students are 17 to 21 year olds who have been failed by our schools many times before, but they haven't given up. They transfer to my school to keep going. They're tough and they're resilient, but they also take time to build trust and to heal. This proposed budget robs us of that time and of that trust. It could rob us of our students learning and even their lives. And this is why I call on you to keep teachers and social workers in schools and commit to restorative justice...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

JOEL SOLO: ...mental health support, and trauma-informed responses to conflict, and to pay for

it you should reduce the spending for school policing and institute a hiring freeze on the NYPD. Thank you. And I support also the fellow students and educators on the line calling for SYEP. That program is crucial for my students and for their families. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ah, Joel, this is Council Member Dromm. Um, you brought up some very interesting points and good analysis. Did you have written testimony?

JOEL SOLO: Ah, yes, I did.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you forward it to me, please?

JOEL SOLO: Yes, sure.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: At ddromatcouncil.nyc.gov.

JOEL SOLO: Thank you, Councilman.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Wesley Guzman.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

WESLEY GUZMAN: My name is Wesley Guzman. I'm a high school senior and a youth leader at Sisters and Brothers United. I constantly worry for the health and safety of my mother, who travels to

work, and when I drop off my groceries to my grandparents. If I'm this worried while we are in the social distancing time I can only imagine how worried families will get when schools reopen. I worry for my peers and siblings that, that schools will not be prepared to reopen safely next year. Prior to the school shutdown due to COVID-19 many schools lacked soap, hot water, working water fountains, overcrowded classrooms, asbestos in the walls, and had zero to one nurses in the building for over a thousand students. These kinds of unhealthy conditions were difficult to deal with before COVID-19, but as our lives and our protocols have shifted I want to ensure that this budget does not forget about student health needs. As the city negotiates on budget priorities they need to ensure that our schools will reopen with increased access to school nurses, increased sanitary products, and increased building maintenance staff funds to ensure students attend schools that are safe and healthy. With that said, it is critical that funding for professional development is kept as our teachers not only need adjusting their teaching models to adapt to our new reality, training on restorative justice practices to

support these transitions, and maintaining a healthy environment are key, especially because we should not rely on SSAs or NYPD to enforce any social distancing protocols in schools. To make this possible, when there's budget cuts across agencies, I suggest you cut more than 1% of the NYPD's budget, which has barely been touched in the mayor's proposed budget. NYPD or SSAs don't make us feel safe.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

WESLEY GUZMAN: They make us feel like we're criminals in and out of schools. They often harass black and brown students. We now see them heavily target people of color in social distancing enforcement. They have helped us, they haven't helped us before and they will certainly not help us now when schools reopen. A just budget for students doesn't criminalize them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Wesley.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Josh Melendez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

JOSH MELENDEZ: Good morning, everyone. My name is Josh Melendez. I live in the Bronx and I am in the sixth grade. I'm a youth leader at Sisters and Brothers United. I feel more uncertain of what

2 will school look like when I return. Like many of my
3 peers, I will continue, COVID-19 will continue to
4 negatively impact my community in many ways, and
5 schools should continue to feel like a safe haven.
6 But after hearing the priorities the, of the
7 chancellor and the Department of Education I feel
8 like my well-being is not a priority. Before schools
9 closed due to the pandemic, there was a major issue
10 in our school that we must address before returning.
11 One of these issues is a lack of resources for
12 students. I attend junior high in 123 in the South
13 Bronx, where asthma rate in children is higher than
14 that of children across New York City. Also we have
15 some of the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases and
16 twice the rate of death due to COVID-19. My schools
17 lacked, my school lacked resources like soap, hot
18 water, and cleaning products, which in a borough with
19 so many vulnerable community members the probability
20 of spreading sickness again is high and there seems
21 to be no attempts to address what the students and
22 staff need most when we go back to school. I have
23 six more years before I'm done with school, public
24 schools. How can, how can I feel like during the
25 next six years of my life will be invested in if what

I see that the Department of Education will continue to spend four times the amount of money on police than that spend on nurses which are more important because of our health. I want to go back to a school building that prioritizes build maintenance, nurses, and sanitizing products. In addition...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

JOSH MELENDEZ: ...to mental health support, social workers, and counselors instead of budget lines that criminalizes young people. Adjusting, ah, proposed budgets not, is not a request, but a moral responsibility. Otherwise, what I could learn from all of this is my life, my voice, and my health does not matter.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Josh. You know who your council member is? Josh, do you know who your council member is? I don't know if he can hear me.

JOSH MELENDEZ: No.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right, find out who it is and if it's not Vanessa Gibson you may want to try to run for office one of these days. [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [laughs] Thank you, Josh.

JOSH MELENDEZ: You're welcome.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Tenzen Chofel.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

TENZEN CHOFEL: Hi, I'm Tenzen Chofel, and I'm a high school senior. I'm a part of the [inaudible] Network and I'm here to urge you to adjust the current budget because it's simply disappointing and truly shows that the government does not care about us. While being a student in New York City I've seen many injustices in our schools. First of all, I'd like to highlight the inequity that exists within our schools already. Black and Latinx students lack support in schools [inaudible] city like restorative justice programs and mental health resources and these are all extremely important to us and this pandemic will only amplify the need for these resources for all students because it's such a traumatic experience. Although there are budget challenges for our city due to this pandemic, taking away from our education and our well-being should never ben on the table. With this budget the city's investing in institutions that over-police black and brown folks and are taking away opportunities from our students. It's absurd that there's gonna be a

hiring freeze for our teachers while we continue to hire more cops every day. Education is a human right and every student should have access to quality education in an environment that they feel safe in. Cops in our schools don't do that. Our teachers, counselors, and social workers do. We should be prioritizing students at all times and especially during a pandemic. Additionally, students have been denied access to summer employment this year, which leaves 75,000 youth across the city with no source of income. Many students and their families cannot afford to lose such an opportunity that they rely on so heavily, especially during these times. To provide them with financial support and essential job experiences that we need for the future and taking away SYEP will only add hardships to low-income families across the city who are, um, who are already so hard hit by this pandemic. Finally, with that said, I'd like to reiterate that I'm urging you to fund schools and education instead of policing us. We should be investing in students because we're the future and every single one of us deserves a fair education and support from our city. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, thank you very much, and, ah, again, ah, incredible testimony from so many young people. Yes, next please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Calvin Humber.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CALVIN HUBER: First of all, I'd like to thank you all for letting me be here today, and so my name is Calvin Huber. I'm a middle school student at Manhattan Country School in District 6. The mayor wants to cut 641 million dollars from our schools next year while giving the New York Police [inaudible] 5 million more. The only part of funding for schools that is increasing is 4 million for policing in schools. For students like me this means vacant positions for teachers or social workers who will retire and not be filled. Instead, we will have brand-new metal detectors in schools, but no new teachers over the next four years. One thing is clear. This needs to change because the proposed bill will damage our [inaudible], our schools, and our communities. Our schools don't need police or metal detectors. They need more teachers to access help for mental health, like school counselors. These are the things that provide the conditions for

schools to be located, locations for healing, so that they can be locations for learning and not locations for criminalizing students, especially those of color. We demand that you not cut school funding. We demand that you get rid of police in schools. We demand that you put m ore teachers in schools. We demand that you put more counselors in schools. We demand that you end zero tolerance policy, which is why we demand that you support the Ending PUSHOUT Act to reduce the injustices of policies and laws currently in place in our schools. Our schools are safer when they have counselors, not cops. Our communities are safer when people's children aren't in danger of arrest every day. Our country is safer when we feel that we are safe when you go to school. Which is why supporting the Ending PUSHOUT Act is what we need right now. We need to make schools safe for those who don't feel safe. We need schools to be safe spaces that their purpose is. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, excellent testimony, thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call up the next panel, which will be Diamond Feliciano, Emily Figueroa, Christopher Webstein, Meryl Lesume,

Macime Almutazer, Rebecca Deltoro, and Shraya Sunderam. Diamond Feliciano.

DIAMOND FELICIANO: Good afternoon.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DIAMOND FELICIANO: Good afternoon. My name is Diamond Feliciano and I'm a member of Make the Road New York. I'm here today because as a young person living in NYC I'm concerned about the direction this budget is headed in our city and the consequences we are going to have to deal with afterwards. As someone who has been a part of Summer Youth Employment Program I understand first-hand how essential this program is. SYEP gave me my first job opportunity at the age of 16. That summer I applied to many jobs and if it wasn't for SYEP I would have not done anything that summer. SYEP provided real-life [inaudible], real-life help with things that had them that liked to show how, how to manage my time, how to build a resume, how to prepare and dress for interviews. If not for SYEP I would have had access to this information and life skills. I grew up in a single-parent household so we did not have many sources of income. The money I received from SYEP was important. It allowed for me to take care of my

main necessities and help my mom with basic, with family needs. I was placed in Make the Road New York, where I learned how to better articulate myself and become more aware of the system that affected my life. Many of, many of the things I learned there I would not have had outside of my SYEP experience because I never had the access to those experience, opportunities. The skills and education I received I am still using and will continue to be a defining aspect of my life. This year the budget has eliminated SYEP and with it the 75,000 jobs that young New Yorkers are counting on. We need that money and we need it now. Only 23 million was cut out at NYPD, which is 0.39% of the budget. This is unacceptable. It's really bothered me when I see that the city has divested from programs that enrich the lives of those that look like me, and instead the preserve and want to further invest in the NYPD, a department that has historically been used to cultivate fear and criminalize people who look like me with escalating a oppressive police presence. This budget does not prioritize our needs. These are types of programs that build experience that we rarely get in school. Now more than ever the city

must pass a budget that prioritize our needs. We demand...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

DIAMOND FELICIANO: We call on the City Council [inaudible] summer employment, not cuts. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Emily Figueroa.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

EMILY FIGUEROA: My name is Emily Figueroa. I'm a special education teacher at Edward A. Reynolds West Side High School, a transfer high school in Manhattan, and I'm here working with Teachers Unite. Education is the number one casualty in the current budget plan but the NYPD is protected. In fact, the one area of funding for schools that is being preserved and increased is the subcontract from the DOE to the NYPD, which is slated to increase by 4 million dollars. This plan guarantees that next year's freshmen of color, LGBTQ freshmen, and freshmen with special needs graduate in lower numbers in four years and are pushed into prisons at higher rates. They will have had fewer teachers and social workers, but more police, surveillance cameras, and

metal detectors. Students will be grieving family members and loved ones when they return to school. They and their families will be reeling from the loss of income and employment they suffered during this crisis. They need to be welcomed back to schools by their teachers and grief counselors, and must have access to programs and opportunities for them to build their futures, not the police. My students are mostly black and Latinx and live in the communities that are hardest hit by the pandemic, both in terms of illness and death, and in terms of comprising large swaths of essential workers who are still working for not enough pay and [inaudible] stay safe at home with most of the resources they need. What my students need after this pandemic is not to be reminded of the perception that they are inherently criminals because of their race, income level, and ZIP code. They need supportive schools that understand the additional traumas they have faced. They need opportunities to support their families and still attend school. Instead of making these deep, devastating cuts to public education we need to ensure that we are fully funding teaching, social work, and other supports in order to support healing,

mental health support, and trauma-informed responses to conflict. We must also restore funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program so that students can help their families financially recover from the economic fallout of this crisis, which has disproportionately affected them. Finally, we must reduce spending for policing and institute a hiring freeze on the NYPD, not on teachers and social workers who support our you. Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Christopher Webstein.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CHRISTOPHER WEBSTEIN: Ah, thank you so much for this opportunity to speak. Thank you, Chair Dromm and, ah, the finance council. My name is Chris Webstein and I'm a teacher at, ah, Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, um, and I'm also here working with Teachers Unite. So, ah, at my school, which is also known as MELS, um, since March 18 we've been working around the clock to support our students and their families in remote learning. Our school community, like so many around the city, has been particularly hard-hit by COVID-19.

We do not yet know the full devastation and grief that is brought upon our school. Our school system essentially is now providing hundreds of essential services to our fellow New Yorkers, from 24-hour counseling to tech support, and the burden and strain on our schools will continue to be great into a very uncertain future. I'm extremely concerned about the mayor's decision to severely cut the DOE's budget for the next year. At a time when we should be pouring more public funds into schools, budget cuts send precisely the wrong message and will devastate our school's, ah, community beyond repair. When we hopefully return to our school building in the fall, we need fully funded schools with enough counselors, social workers, nurses, and teachers to meet the needs of our traumatized students. Um, what we don't need are things that, ah, my fellow panelists have mentioned, um, such as more metal detectors and more cops in our schools. Um, we should be investing in, ah, personnel and resources that will actually support our students that need us. Um, I plead with you to fully fund our schools next year so that our children get the education and care that they deserve. Please stand with the students, parents,

teachers, and school staff of the city to ensure that we put education funding at the top of the priority list for 2020, not at the bottom. We simply...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHRISTOPHER WEBSTEIN: ...ah, careen from one crisis to another, um, and so I hope that you will, ah, join us in this fight and push back against the mayor's proposed budget for the sake of my students and we as educators. Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very much, Christopher.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Meryl Lesume.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MERYL LESUME: My name is Meryl Lesume. I'm a 15-year-old Bengali American founder of the nonprofit Polyfem, an organization that aims to turn women and nonbinary young people into politicians. We hope that our members will become City Council members just like you in the future. Today I stand with my fellow students to demand that NYC's 1.1 million public school students get the just budget that they deserve. Imagine the pain, the agony of being left behind, of being told that your arts

education, your summer youth employment, restorative justice, and mental and physical health support will be left behind, of being told that we don't matter. But we refuse to be left behind. We are rightfully vindicated that the city has chosen to invest in the police force rather than our education, that the city would rather have us people of color in handcuffs than going to college, as seen by the cuts in the college access program against a 6 billion dollar NYPD budget. Don't turn us into sacrificial lambs by balancing the budget on our back. Don't let our air quality be compromised by the 10 million dollar cut in air conditioning installations for the sake of more NYPD. Don't let our teachers be culturally insensitive with the 67 million dollar cut in professional development for more NYPD. Don't let us die by suicide as the city imposes a hiring freeze on social workers while the NYPD is overstaffed. This is more than just a budget. This is about justice. This is about the future, our future, of the lives of people who will take your place in City Council. I may testify all that I want, but the choice is up to you, City Council, to decide my generation's future.

[inaudible] or to our unprecedented growth. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I just want to say that was very moving...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Oh my God.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...and thank you so much. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: That was amazing. Thank you so much. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I hope we got a good tape of that because, um, you can use that. That's very moving. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Oh my God.

MERYL LESUME: Thank you. [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: You did excellent. [laughs]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Macime Almutazer.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MACIME ALMUTAZER: Hi, do you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

MACIME ALMUTAZER: My name is Macime Almutazer. I'm a young American born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, an activist, and a full-time student at Brooklyn College studying history and

secondary education. As a student who has gone through public education all my life, I aspired to get a [inaudible] degree in education and be the future chancellor of the New York City DOE to [inaudible] our districts. I urge the council to negotiate a just budget that would invest in our demand and diversify from policing. It's important better, to better fund the public education system because the one million diverse students are the leaders of tomorrow. If we fail better funding our schools then we are failing as a nation and depriving our students from the education they deserve to be successful. Throughout my experience I've been a part of numerous leadership organizations ranging from student government, IntegrateNYC, the Superintendent Council, and speaking on issues where public education fails because I believe that when injustice come our way we need to fight back and do what's right. One experience I remember was elementary school in the fourth grade. I failed the fourth grade because I did not pass the yearly state exam simply because I never had the resources. My parents did not speak English at the time. I remember translating everything that came, ah, that

2 came to the fifth, ah, that came into school to
3 translate to Arabic. One day there was an option to
4 file an appeal in order to promote me to the fifth
5 grade. I had to write that letter on behalf of my
6 parents because they did not know how to write and
7 speak English. It was unfair that there were
8 students who were disrespectful and never showed up
9 to class who got promoted after everyone heard in the
10 school that I was held back. I was teased, called
11 hateful words. This was not fair because I've always
12 been known as a student who works twice as hard in
13 order to reach my goal. Therefore, this is why I'm
14 demanding for justice now because there are people
15 remaining silent walking in my shoes. To conclude,
16 please consider your decision and better fund our
17 schools. You cannot hold an officer and a teacher to
18 the same level, the reason being is because an
19 educator has the power and magic to connect and make
20 bonds with that, with their students. They are the
21 ones who...
22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
23 MACIME ALMUTAZER: ...[inaudible]
24 entrepreneurs. In the, ah, words of Barack Obama, a
25 change is brought about because ordinary people do

extraordinary things. The future of so many New York City students is in your hands. We're counting on you to pass a just budget that will protect our schools and diverse from policing. Thank you, and I yield my time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, Macime, and I am very sorry you had to go through so much of that stuff in school. I want you to know, though, I, um, look at all your, um, tweets, so, ah, they're, they're getting to the right people. Thank you.

MACIME ALMUTAZER: Thank you, I appreciate it.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rebecca Deltoro.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starting now.

REBECCA DELTORO: Good afternoon. My name is Rebecca Deltoro and I'm a special education teacher and restorative justice coordinator at [inaudible] School, and I'm also a member of Teachers Unite. The proposed education budget does little to respond to the trauma and the dire needs that students and their families are experiencing during this time. Divesting from mental health, guidance counselors, social workers, and student supports is a

deliberate attempt at funneling our most vulnerable young people into the school to prison pipeline, and those same students are the ones that have been most affected by COVID-19. The mayor guarantees that these young people graduate in lower numbers and are pushed into prisons at higher rates in the next four years. Increased policing leads to decreased success. As a transfer school teacher I'm witness to the effects of school pushout every single day, and I know that keeping our students connected and successful has everything to do with the relationships that we build. During school closures I've spent an average of two to three hours per day sending texts, making calls, planning virtual birthday parties and graduation celebrations. We're seeking other creative ways to reengage my young people. Relationships make school safe, not police. Mayor de Blasio is dedicated to preserving and increasing one area of funding for schools. The subcontract from DOE to NYPD is slated to increase by 4 million dollars. A budget that focuses on equity would cut funding from the NYPD. An antiracist budget would eliminate funding for surveillance and metal detectors. A just budget would refund

restorative justice, mental health, nurses, and SYEP. We demand that you invest in our communities and impose a hiring freeze on the NYPD and cut funding for school policing. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Shraya Sunderam.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SHRAYA SUNDERAM: My name is Shraya Sunderam and I am a high school history teacher in a district public school in lower Manhattan, and a member of Teachers Unite and the Dignity for Schools campaign. I am incredibly disappointed by the proposed budget for the 2020 school year, largely due to its emphasis on policing. Especially given the context of COVID-19, I'm deeply concerned about students reentering our schools. COVID creates conditions that actually requires an increase in funding going towards social emotional supports, not less funding. So the gap that is being created by cutting funding and freezing the hiring of teachers and social workers will be felt even more acutely this fall. I am a ninth grade teacher and I know that my future ninth graders will need trauma-informed care and the support of social workers,

educators, and a restorative justice system, not police. And with the fear that we may not even be in schools this fall, having a strong and robust guidance system to prevent students from falling through the cracks is without a doubt far more necessary than new security cameras or metal detectors in empty schools. Because 54 million dollars will be cut from equity and excellence programs, I am deeply concerned that my students of colors, English language learners, and students with IEPs will not have the resources that they need to graduate in a normal school year, yet alone in a post-COVID world. It is unacceptable that under the current budget they will have had fewer teachers and social workers but more police and surveillance cameras. The Dignity in School campaign therefore demands the following: No hiring freezes on teachers and social workers, increased funding for health, mental health, and sanitation supports for when schools do return, the restoration of SYEP and the 75,000 jobs for young people, and a hiring freeze on the NYPD, cutting funding for school policing. What we need is a budget that centers healing and student

welfare, not policing. We demand a just budget. Divest from policing. Invest in healing. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be Caitlyn Delson, Caitlyn Pace, Gillian Mendoza, Christina Dang, Madeline Borelli, Mikada Gershensen, Nima Sherpa, and Victoria Ardaqua. Ah, Caitlyn Delson?

CAITLYN DELSON: Hi. I'm Caitlyn Delson.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CAITLYN DELSON: I'm Caitlyn Delson. I'm a teacher at Leaders High School in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, and a member of Teachers Unite. During this pandemic we've seen the role that schools and teachers play in our communities, providing resources such as food, technology, and support, and sometimes we're the only non-family connection that a student sees that day. We need to invest in supporting our students and families through more teachers and more counselors, and divest from the NYPD in our schools. Our students and communities with less are already being disproportionately affected by this crisis. This overlaps with the communities and schools who are over-policed and over-criminalized. Police in

schools is not normal. Scanning in schools is not normal. And we should not pretend that is. My students right now don't need police in schools. My students need support and help continuing their learning, which comes from teachers and counselors. Right now some of my students are dealing with extremely heavy things, including caring for sick family members or they have family members who have died, they're caring for younger siblings while their parents are working and they can't focus on learning while they're doing that. Some of them are working to earn money for their families or support the family business. Others have inadequate technology or internet and can't access online learning, and as a special education teacher many of my students have disabilities that make online learning very difficult or nearly impossible. Students all over the city right now are experiencing these issues. Um, pouring money into the NYPD, scanners, and surveillance that alienate and criminalize our students are not where we need to focus our resources right now. In my school scanning and NYPD presence does not keep our students safe. What keeps my students safe is because our administration, counselors, teachers, and

the students themselves have worked hard to build a sense of community and effective restorative justice program that ensures safety for everyone in the building. We don't know for sure what school will look like next year, but we do know that our students and families are going [inaudible]...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

CAITLYN DELSON: We need to provide the necessary support to help our students through more teachers and more counselors and less NYPD in our schools. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Caitlyn Pace.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CAITLYN PACE: Good afternoon. My name is Caitlyn Pace and I have been a proud member of the DOE and a special education teacher at the High School of Public Communication, Arts, and Technology for six years. Ah, first I would like to say that it has been a honor to teach alongside the thousands of people who support our beautiful children. Um, in my time as a teacher, as a dean, and a coach I have learned all too well how trauma negatively impacts our students emotionally and is a detriment to their ability to learn. Although our teachers and

2 counselors work tirelessly to improve the students'
3 mental health, institutional racism and poverty
4 continue to impact my kids. Post COVID our students'
5 mental health will inevitably be worse. Teachers
6 need training around trauma-based teaching and we
7 need added support for our counselors and social
8 workers. Taking it away at this time will only make
9 the existing problem worse. In addition to academic
10 impacts, the stresses that our students face will
11 impact our health in the future. According to
12 research by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, the surgeon
13 general of California, stress is the leading cause of
14 health-related issues later in life, including
15 diabetes and heart disease. With the additional
16 stress of my students and their families being
17 disproportionately impacted by COVID, there will most
18 definitely be an unnecessary loss of life and an
19 impact on the healthcare system in the future.
20 Finally, I became an educator because I believe that
21 we can make a better world when we empower youth and
22 educate them in meaningful ways. If we are looking
23 to the future, which we most definitely should be, we
24 need to focus on educating a generation that will be
25 prepared to deal with climate change, natural

disasters, and future pandemics. Defunding education is defunding our future. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Gillian Mendoza.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

GILLIAN MENDOZA: Hello, my name is Gillian Mendoza. I am an organizer at the [inaudible] high school senior from Jackson Heights. Before I begin, I asked everyone to recognize how important education is to society and its development. Without education we would have close to nothing. I'm here to, I'm here today to urge the current budget to be adjusted. With money being cut from education and programs that benefit young people, students are being given the short end of the stick. I recognize that there a lot of economic challenges as a result of COVID-19. However, cutting that much money from education should never be an option with our already existing underfunded schools. There were hundreds of millions of dollars cut from the DOE, but the NYPD only got 23 million dollars cut from their budget. It is obvious who the city cares about more. After quarantine is over and we get back to school, students will need more support than ever before. Investing in afterschool activities, mental

health resources, counselors, therapists, and more restorative practices is vital and extremely necessary for students and educators transitioning back into school buildings. Instead of doing a disservice to many schools and implementing the five-year hiring freeze, there will be positions vacant once teachers and social workers retire. Let's invest in improving schools instead of further ruining this education system. Our [inaudible] observation on how the NYPD isn't going to have any sort of hiring freeze. In fact, their head count was slightly increased. Why do we, why do we prioritize policing over education? For example, the DOE was ready to funnel 200 million dollars into new surveillance and policing equipment in schools, equipment that make sure schools largely reflect prisons. I'm deeply disappointed and saddened by how little students are prioritized in the city. Furthermore, the complete cut of the Summer Youth Employment Program further pushes my belief that the city does not care about young people. This is 75,000 jobs that were cut altogether. People are counting on them. They are a huge part of a lot of my friends, family members, and many young people

across the city's income. Let me end by saying that it's a shame how the city doesn't prioritize education. However, it is never too late to start.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

GILLIAN MENDOZA: Please address [inaudible] without education is finally seen as a priority. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Madeline Borelli.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MADELINE BORELLI: Hi, good afternoon. Um, my name is Madeline Borelli. I'm the mother of two. I'm a special education teacher at IS-228 in Gravesend, Brooklyn. I am also a member of Teachers Unite, and I chose to testify today because the mayor's proposed budget would be an absolute devastation to our schools. We cannot provide the youth of the city the free and appropriate public education they are entitled to if we are stripped of our funds and subjected to violent policing and surveillance. The mayor has decided that there are no money for [inaudible] staff or community-based programs, but there are funds to increase the NYPD DOE subcontract for school safety by 4 million

dollars. Students will return school carrying the grief and trauma of this pandemic, only to be welcomed back by metal detectors and more cops, instead of new teachers, counselors, and social workers. To take 641 million dollars from our schools next year alone is indefensible and yet the NYPD, who has continued to terrorize black and brown communities throughout this public health crisis will not share the burden of the city's financial deficit. Teachers, students, and parents were asked to undertake the monumental task of creating, implementing, and engaging with remote learning. We did this with little to no preparation or warning, and we have risen to the occasion as united communities and have provided learning experiences and social emotional outreach for our 1.1 million students. Now we have found out that we are being refused the funds to continue the work of healing and educating our children. Meanwhile, the NYPD, who will only receive 1.2% of the proposed city budget cuts, goes on brutalizing our neighbors in the name of public health. It is time for the city to do the right thing, divest from policing, invest in healing,

and fully fund New York City schools. I thank you, council members, for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Christina Dang.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CHRISTINA DANG: My name is Christina Dang and I am a member of the Liberation program of the Brotherhood Sister Soul. In response to the financial crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, I am asking our city to do right by its children. Governor Cuomo has decided to make budget cuts to our funding for health care, transportation, and, undeniably, our education. By the time the curve flattens and we are ready to heal from this crisis, students returning to their classrooms will be in dire need of support and resources. Other than the fact that our education system is underfunded, Mayor de Blasio is planning on cutting our funds by 827 million dollars. Many other students, including myself, are demanding a divestment from the NYPD. The NYPD's immense investment in the New York City public schools is an unwholesome consequence of the Memorandum of Understanding. It is time for the City Council to step up if the committee is truly considerate of our young people's well-being. You

should start with this with amending these budget cuts. The budget cuts as they currently stand will result in shortages in teachers, even less student support staff, and even more crowded classrooms. Programs that have been designed to cater to students will lack the appropriate amount of money to keep the money. Youth services, such as the comprehensive afterschool system of New York City, offer programs such as art, games, sports, and skill-building activities to about 222,000 children every year. Jeopardizing these programs will additionally deprive the underprivileged children who rely on these resources of social, academic, and emotional learning in part of their development. While it is true that budget cuts can be detrimental in several ways, the New York State government should be cutting funds for the NYPD. Simply choosing to prioritize the over-policing of young people, more specifically young people of color, over our education, is a morally corrupt choice. Instead of balancing the state's books by increasing taxing on the upper class, Cuomo has instead chosen to stay quiet and resort to budget cuts. De Blasio, in turn, has chosen to make up for shortages by selling out students. It is time for

the City Council to end these morally corrupt practices of hurting the hurt. As a high school student at Central Park East, I can speak upon the fact that I only have one college counselor and two guidance counselors to provide support for...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHRISTINA DANG: ...[inaudible]. This significantly low ratio of students to support staff is absurd. In my college application process it was extremely difficult to meet with my counselor along with the other 114 seniors who also needed help. We at the Liberation program have been pushing for the city to quadruple the number of student support staff, while also putting a stay on the hiring of school safety agents. This [inaudible] will be impossible to achieve if the budget cuts are in place, not addressing the concerns we are raising regarding student mental health. It will have the ultimate effect of perpetuating the school to prison pipeline, as well as not addressing the traumatizing impact of this pandemic on student [inaudible]. Cutting these educational funds is also cutting our successful blueprint to prosper in school. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Where are you going to college?

CHRISTINA DANG: What did you say?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I said where are you going to college, have you made a decision?

CHRISTINA DANG: Ah, yes, I'm going to Boston College.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Fantastic, good, good luck.

CHRISTINA DANG: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You're welcome.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mikada Gershensen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

MIKADA GERSHENSEN: Hello. My name is Mikada Gershensen. Thank you for the space to be heard. I'm a staff developer and restorative practices trainer at Morningside Center, and today I'm working with Teachers Unite to express my concern with the proposed budget, budget. Over the past four years I've been working in public schools with teachers, administrators, and hundreds of students, specifically in Harlem and the Bronx. And I support families and school communities in building stronger relationships through skills like self-awareness and

[inaudible] management and understanding what's happening in our communities. The proposed cut of 641 million dollars from our schools next year will remove in-school support, specifically restorative practices as a way to build community and skills to support all students and people in the community, but specifically underestimated populations. Teachers and students and parents need support right now. We are profoundly interconnected and our students [inaudible] learning, our teachers [inaudible] teaching, and our parents' mood and well-being affects the home life. We need to ask ourselves what's really important as we build and rebuild our schools. What is the point of reopening our schools if our minds and bodies are so overwhelmed that we can't learn anything? We are experiencing collective trauma and collective loss and we all need trauma-informed support to transition back to school. People had so little closure at the end of this year. Families have [inaudible] on important milestone memories and are struggling with mental health and economic stability. They need to be welcomed back to their schools by teachers, grief counselors, and restorative practices. A 2015 study out of Columbia

suggested that every dollar spent tending to the social emotional development of students gives an $11 return. So that's one dollar that gives an $11 return and our communities are cared for during this extremely overwhelming and confusing and tragic situation.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MIKADA GERSHENSEN: Please [inaudible], please invest in our children. Thank you for your time and consideration.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Mikada.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Nima Sherpa.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

NIMA SHERPA: Good afternoon. I'm Nima Sherpa and I'm here to speak on the executive budget. The proposed budget is exploiting this public health crisis to empower institutions that have long been upholding and enforcing racial and economic inequities. This budget will be protecting the NYPD at the expense of youth educational programs and services. Cuts to education will be 2800% greater than cuts to policing. In addition, there will be a four-year hiring freeze for teachers and social workers, but the city will be continuing to hire

police officers, their head count expected to slightly increase as well. This decision will hit underserved communities the hardest, impacting not only students who depend on these educational programs, but also will widely jeopardize the safety of all black and brown bodies as they are preyed upon by the NYPD. I urge the council to reconsider the implications of this budget and commit to funding restorative justice, healing and mental health support for students. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Victoria Ardaqua.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

VICTORIA ARDAQUA: Um, hello, hello everyone. My name is Victoria Ardaqua and I'm a [inaudible] at, um, Central Park East High School and a member of the Liberation program of the Brotherhood Sister Soul. It is essential that students should have professional help readily accessible to them instead of us being shamed and criminalized when we do not receive the help that is needed to be the best versions of ourselves. [inaudible] New Yorkers have died. These includes parents, siblings, teachers, community members, and more for our 1.1 million NYC

public school students. This new reality causes strain in the lives and mental health of students like me and we have been struggling. To be honest, we were struggling before. The pandemic has just made everything worse. To be clear, not having mental health support before and now shows a lack of care and consideration. I'm here to discuss the tremendous change that will occur in the lives of NYC public schools students if our education was properly funded. NOP our campaign demands to include a call for increase in the hiring of student support staff and a stay on hiring more school safety agents that are part of the NYPD. If funds were to be allocated from the NYPD to the betterment of our education and well-being, NYC public school students will actually be able to see their counselors more than they see police officers in their schools. Speaking from personal experience, I always wished for a more easily accessible mental health center in all my four years of being in high school. There are many instances in which my mental health wasn't in the best state and I never felt comfortable sharing what was going on because it was hard to do so in an environment where the presence of SSAs were more

prevalent than guidance counselors for the entire school. In my high school there are many other students who continue to experience what I did and will need counselors more when schools open in the fall. It is immoral to hold and enforce the notion that more police officers in our schools make our schools better than do counselors. This is what you're saying basically when DOE funding cuts are substantially higher than any of the NYPD. We believe there should not even be a link between the NYPD and DOE in the first place. It is safe to say that public school students know...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

VICTORIA ARDAQUA: ...[inaudible]. An increase in student support staff is the first of many things. What we do not need is the cutting of 641 million dollars in funding for the DOE and only 23 million for the NYPD. That clearly depicts where our city stands on the education and well-being of our city's youth. And if you disagree with this you will amend the budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call our next panel, um, Alejandra Duke Sifuentes, Captain

Jonathan Bulwer, Charlotte Cohen, Diane Jacobowitz, Francine Garber Cohen, Gail Thacker, Katherine Delaney, Lucy Sexton, Rachel Was, and Takisha Dozier. Alejandra Duke Sifuentes?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ALEJANDRA DUKE SIFUENTES: Thank you. My name is Alejandra Duke Sifuentes. I am an immigrant activist and I am the executive director of Dance NYC. I'm here on behalf of Dance NYC, a service organization which serves over 5000 individual dance artists, 1200 dance-making entities, and 500 nonprofit companies based in New York City. I join my colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking the council for your leadership during this time, and requesting one, that the city include the arts and culture communities in their economic support and relief plans and pass legislation to protect our organizations and workers. Two, that the city reduce its proposed cuts to discretionary funding which disproportionately impacts smaller organizations run by and serving communities of color, immigrant, and disabled communities. And three, that the city reduces its proposed cuts to the Department of Education,

1 2 particularly ensuring that arts workers,
3 organizations, and services continue to remain
4 essential educational services provided to students
5 and their communities. Culture is what makes New
6 York City the most important cultural capitol in the
7 world and a leading force that has led the city's
8 economic recovery in past crises, including 9/11.
9 Artists are necessary workers. During this crisis
10 dance organizations, artists, and educators have
11 remained active providing online dance classes,
12 digital performances, and conversations on recovery
13 and mental health. Dance NYC has undertaken
14 comprehensive research on the impact of this moment
15 in the sector, particularly on organizations and
16 individual dance workers, while providing nearly one
17 million dollars in relief support to those very
18 people. Despite this, dance workers and
19 organizations are facing the stark reality of
20 possible closings due to insurmountable rent prices,
21 inability to pay their workers, and inability to earn
22 income from in-person gatherings or digital content.
23 This is further exacerbated as city contracts remain
24 unpaid at their full capcity, even for services
25

already rendered, and with budget cuts to the Department of Education that...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ALEJANDRA DUKE SIFUENTES: ...represent a significant portion of organizational and individually revenue streams for dance community. We thank the council in considering arts workers as we look to the future of our city and bringing it back to a full economic engine. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Captain Jonathan Bulwer.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CAPTAIN JONATHAN BULWER: Good. I'm Jonathan Bulwer, president of South Street Seaport Museum. Ah, thank you, Chairman Dromm, Speaker Johnson, my own council member, Margaret Chin. Nice to see you all here and thank you for this opportunity. The South Street Seaport Museum represents the beginning of this city that we love. We operate citywide from a home port in the birthplace of New York, the very lower east side of this island of Manhattan. Our mission is educational, connecting the history of New York to the present, connecting South Street to Wall Street,

to Broadway, to the rest of the city, and we're a proud member of the incredible constellation of arts, cultural, and educational institutions in this cultural metropolis. It will come as no surprise to this body that organizations like ours have been hit hard. We and our colleagues have dramatically reduced staff and activities of all types. Indeed, museums, theaters, dance companies, and the like are all struggling. Many of us have turned our work virtual, responding directly to New York City public schools, who reached to us to support them in challenging new educational times. Estimates suggest that a huge percentage of small businesses and restaurants will not reopen and surely this will be true for some of the arts and cultural institutions that make the beating heart of the City of New York. For the seaport museum this pandemic follows the triple body blows of 9/11, the 2008 financial crisis, and Hurricane Sandy, all of which we managed to be at the leading edge of, and it's hard to imagine any organization surviving this many devastations. This one comes at a terrible time, just as we were rebuilding. New York's identity as a world metropolis rests squarely on its role as a cultural

leader. Although our museums and similar organizations have closed their front doors, the people behind them are very active. We meet as cultural leaders every day at a 3:00 p.m. phone call that's been covered by the *New York Times*. We are commismerating, collaborating, and planning for the vital role that our organizations will play in the rebuilding of New York. I therefore urge you to prioritize museums, arts, and culture in your budget process. We know the challenges are real.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CAPTAIN JONATHAN BULWER: But a long view clearly represents that these organizations as the beating heart of the city will be essential to rebuilding the city we love. We commit to that. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Charlotte Cohen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CHARLOTTE COHEN: I'm Charlotte Cohen, executive director of Brooklyn Arts Council, which supports emerging, immigrant, and traditionally underserved artists who work with us in public schools and publicly funded senior centers that have limited resources. We appreciate that the council

needs to make hard decisions and respond to the primary fiscal calendar's [inaudible]. These decisions will have a ripple effect. As the CASA and Su Casa initiatives are cut it means that 20,000 children, their families, and the seniors who participate in our programs won't have access to arts activities that literally save their lives. CASA programs provide safe haven to many children at the end of the school day and participation in Su Casa programs are often the only social engagement seniors have for days on end. Since late March we have successfully provided remote CASA and Su Casa programs in Brooklyn neighborhoods most affected by the COVID crisis, and artists have responded with great enthusiasm. New York is at the apex of the art world, not only because of our world-renowned theaters and museums, but also because of the deep engagement in the arts at every level of society. It is organizations like the five borough arts councils that provide close relationships with our citizens. And it is your arts initiatives that help make this possible. I ask you to restore funding for these [inaudible] otherwise I fear that the small arts groups that we support will not survive much longer

and our stability will be threatened. And I'd like to share a few comments from our partners. From, um, PS-231, "My students are on the autism spectrum. Knowing that the CASA program artists have never shied away from student or [inaudible].

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHARLOTTE COHEN: "I would hate to know that this would be the last time that my special needs students would be able to participate in this program because of budget cuts." Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Diane Jacobowitz.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DIANE JACOBOWITZ: Hi, everyone. Um, dear Chairmans Dromm, Gibson, Speaker Johnson, and esteemed council members, thank you so much for this opportunity to speak with you today. As ED of Dance Wave I'm pleased to advocate for arts education and dance education in the public schools, our senior communities and people with disabilities. Dance Wave, a socially conscious nonprofit dance education organization, has been a force in Brooklyn for over 25 years. Our programming reaches 6000 youth and adults and annually in over 50 schools, community

centers, and senior centers in all five boroughs. A majority of our audience identify as people of color and low income, and several of our programs serve people with disabilities. We bring transformative skill development and mentorship that enables our audience to succeed as tomorrow's leaders, artists, thinkers, and visonaries. Last year in our Dance Wave to College and Beyond nationwide symposium we facilitated 4.5 million dollars in scholarships for young dancers to attend the nation's top college dance programs. Prior to COVID-19 many communities of color and low-income persons already faced daily adversity in addition to economic barriers to achieving their dreams. Now these communities are facing even more hardship as we can unequivocally state that communities of color are disproportionately affected by this pandemic. The proposed budget cuts will only further this hardship as these cuts will predominantly affect smaller organizations like Dance Wave serving people of color. Simply put, this will be disastrous for our students and their futures, and a detriment to the amazing work that they and we have accomplished so far. City youth locked in their homes without

physical and emotional connections, are experiencing depression...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

DIANE JACOBOWITZH: ...[inaudible], and anxiety, and in some case loss. Dance releases stress and calms the nervous system, which boosts our immune system and helps our bodies fight sickness, like the, the virus. I ask the City Council to release the stipulation from the DOE and allow continued funding for all arts education services back to the school. The unique and diverse cultural life in New York City cannot function without arts organizations. The positive inspiring voices from the arts will lead our city and the country to healing. All of us here, the youth, the seniors, people of all colors and abilities in New York City and the world need the arts for healing. Let's remember why we call this city a great city and what we need to bring it back to life. Keep arts education in the schools so we can keep mentoring our youth to be tomorrow's leaders and reinstate the funding from DOE and for CASA, for Su Casa, and the Cultural Immigrant Initiative so we can continue to bring the inspiring message of resiliency and hope to

our public school children, our seniors, populations of all abilities, and those who are suffering from illness, poverty, and fear. Let there be no doubt. The arts are an essential service for all of us. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Francine Garber Cohen.

FRANCINE GARBER COHEN: I'm...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

FRANCINE GARBER COHEN: I'm Fran Garber Cohen, president of Regina Opera Company in Brooklyn. For 50 years Regina Opera has offered Brooklynites year-round, fully staged operas with orchestra, and with English super titles as well as ticketed and free concerts. We provide affordable entertainment for audiences who may not otherwise be able to attend live performances. We perform in, ah, handicap-accessible venues. The need for the cultural enrichment that we provide is reflected in the fact that over 4000 people attended our performances last year, some of which were funded by Charlotte Cohen and Council Member Menchaca. Our offerings are particularly vital to senior citizens, who make up

over 65% of our audience. They come to be uplifted by the music, to stimulate their minds, to get them out of their homes, and to meet friends. Regina Opera also performs in, mostly in Sunset Park, which is an underserved area, as well as Bay Ridge, Borough Park, and many other sections in Brooklyn. Our performances add to the cultural vitality that serves as a magnent for prospective residents and businesses. Cuts in discretionary funding will be a terrible hardship for most arts organizations. It would result in fewer performances and even closures of some of the vital organizations. Especially hurt would be small organizations, like Regina Opera, that serve populations that are all too overlooked. As we move forward from the COVID-19 pandemic these communities will need more than ever the healing and strengthening that culture, especially music, provides. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Gail Thacker.

GAIL THACKER: Hi, everyone. Thank you, council.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

GAIL THACKER: My name is Gail Thacker. Can I go?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

GAIL THACKER: I have the privilege to direct the 71-year-old Gene Frankel Theater for 15 years now. Fear is an abuse of the imagination. Gene Frankel often said this to me when I needed to be fearless. So today in this climate we, Council, need to be fearless. My voice is one of a group of independent, often off-of-Broadway theaters in the midst of a social, economical, political crisis and many of these small theaters are on the brink of closing. The arts are the soul of our city. Its importance is vast. It's spiritual. It inspires. It inspires people to reach to be better. Please do not cut the culture and arts out of your budget. We ask for this because so much of it depends on our survival. Often off-of-Broadway theater with our constant changing of sets employes many craftspeople, artists, and technicians. Restaurants and hotels are drawn to neighborhoods by the presence of theaters. The diversity of our programs bring in new groups to the neighborhoods. And then they discover other resources and other businesses there. So the cuts in

the budgets to the arts and cultures not only hurt us, it hurts them. So please do not cut the arts out of the budget. Thank you. Thank you, Council.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Katherine Delaney.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

KATHERINE DELANEY: Good day. My name is Katherine Delaney and I'm here to represent the New York Foundation for the Arts. We are an arts service organization whose mission is to provide financial, educational, and professional services to individual artists and emerging arts organizations. During the COVID crisis we have been hard at work providing emergency funding to individual artists and arts workers. By the end of our fiscal year on June 30 we will have dispersed over 4 million dollars to individuals and we will continue to focus all of our resources on providing aid to artists and arts workers who are being hit hardest by this crisis. Our work impacts real human beings and it is critical work to the communities in New York City. There are hundreds of thousands of artists living across the city who are being economically impacted by COVID, not just because of the shutdown of the arts sector, but also because the part-time work they use to

supplement their income, such as restaurant work and retail work has also shut down. The desperation we're seeing from our constituents is very real. In order for us to continue our work we need funding now more than ever. While we are working to get millions of dollars out to artists, our own operating costs have increased and we have limited funds remaining to continue our own operations, and this is true of many arts organizations. We need discretionary funding to continue and we need core program funding to continue or we will not survive this crisis. We recognize that City Council is facing many difficult budget decisions and a ballooning budget deficit. All we ask is that you keep in mind that artists and arts workers are real people who rely on the program services and economic support that arts organizations provide.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

KATHERINE DELANEY: We rely on your support. We also ask that you remember that arts and culture is a huge economic driver and under normal circumstances accounts for nearly 15% of the city's economic activity. We know you have a difficult job ahead and we want to thank you for doing your best

and we wanted to give special thanks to our council member in DUMBO, New York, Steven Levin, for supporting the immigrant artist community that we serve. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Counsel, is this the last of the panel?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There are three more people in this panel.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Understand, OK, they have an announcement to make. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lucy Sexton.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

LUCY SEXTON: Thank you for hearing my and so many others' testimony and [inaudible] to the entire City Council for all the care and work you have been doing for our city in this crisis. My name is Lucy Sexton. I'm proud to head New Yorkers for Culture and Arts, a citywide coalition of cultural groups of every size, from every neighborhood. Culture was the first to be shuttered. [inaudible] artist, culture...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think we're having trouble.

LUCY SEXTON: [inaudible] its new research [inaudible] crisis and, and as the comptroller's recent report noted the economy generates, the creative economy generates 110 billion dollars in economic activity for our city every year. So a crisis for culture is a crisis for our city. Despite that, the shutdown, despite the shutdown culture never closed. Culture was playing a critical role in addressing the pressing needs of the communities devastated by this crisis. Jack Arts in Brooklyn and other theaters are serving as food distribution centers. Only programs provide a lifeline for kids stuck at home. Brick Theater is working with senior NYCHA residents in Fort Greene. Snug Harbor Cultural Center is hosting a testing center. Queens Theater is sending packages of art materials to kids stuck at home. And this is in a school district where 104 children have lost one or both parents. For their and all of our mental health we need the connection, catharsis, and healing that arts and culture provide. Data shows neighborhoods with culture centers even have reduced crime outcomes. After the city's bankruptcy in the 1970s it was artists and culture that took over hollowed-

out spaces and reinvented New York City. After 9/11 culture led downtown's recovery, and the great art gesture, the Towers of Light, gave us hope. Culture is ready with creative solutions now. We'd like to offer hundreds of classes through the DOE portal this summer. We can create socially distant performances in our newly opened streets. We need to be part of every reopening conversation as we again reimagine...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

LUCY SEXTON: ...what New York City can be. We ask that the council continue to fund culture, most importantly by restoring cuts to discretionary funding, which disproportionately impacts fragile arts groups of color and immigrant art groups serving the most devastated community. They more than anyone need the community's strengthening, the healing, and the economic rejuvenation that culture provides. Thank you for letting me testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rachel Watts.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

RACHEL WATTS: Hi, it's been truly inspirational to hear the testimonies today, especially from young people. Um, thank you for the

opportunity to testify and for your leadership. My name is Rachel Watts and I come to you as a board member of the New York City Arts and Education Round Table and as someone who has worked in the arts education field in New York City for over 20 years. I'm here to highlight the importance of immediately investing in arts education's ability to support the city's recovery process and positively engage young people. The New York City Arts and Education Round Table is a service organization whose core purpose is to elevate, enhance, and sustain the work of the arts education community in New York City schools and beyond. We represent over 200 cultural organizations and thousands of teaching artists in every discipline. These creative thinkers quickly pivoted to designing engaging remote arts learning curriculum that support teachers and families. These arts learning opportunities gave students space to process their current reality and build important life skills that will help them move beyond this pandemic. As New York City recovers from the COVID-19 crisis over the coming months and years, the arts and culture sector will play a crucial role in the recovery of schools and communities. In allocating cuts in

resources, the City Council must put their faith in the arts to help process trauma, restore joy, support physical fitness, and build communities. In order for this to happen city agencies need sustained funding. Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth and Community Development, or the Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community. That is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on our students or their future. We need you, the council members, who understand that the arts are essential, to urge the mayor to make the boldest step he can towards fostering renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

RACHEL WATTS: Thank you for your time and consideration.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Takisha Dozier.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time beings now.

TAKISHA DOZIER: Good evening. My name is Takisha Dozier, Bronx resident, [inaudible] community liaison for the Bronx [inaudible]. I hope

that you and your staff and families are all safe and well. Thanks for [inaudible]. I'm also asking for the City Council's continued support of arts and culture education programs. For the past 10 years we've proudly operated as a museum without walls. We travel throughout the Bronx with our big purple bus that we call Museum on the Go, which [inaudible] Greenwood, which is our mobile museum experiment with enrichment activities outside of lessons in schools. On an annual basis we see more than 16,000 children and caregivers, and after an in-school program [inaudible] expense budget from our City Council members. Thank you again. In the last nine years we worked with more than 80,000 using our museum bus at more than 85 schools, shelters, hospitals, and 400 festivals. As many of you know, the Bronx Students' Museum is developing a museum facility near Yankee Stadium, one of the hardest hit of all neighborhoods in the city by the pandemic and we will be the first children's museum in the Bronx's history. Thanks to the generous support of many, including the City Council, our facility is scheduled to open this fall, was scheduled. However, in the wake of the current pandemic [inaudible] opening, um, won't happen for

another year, till the end of 2021. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and guided by our ongoing community input and outreach, the museum developed [inaudible] online activity for educational content delivered on weekdays. For our Bronx partner schools we are also providing tailored virtual museum visits that teaches [inaudible] and their curriculum. We're currently working on developing summer enrichment programming that will be available through Bronx...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

TAKISHA DOZIER: ...[inaudible]. Any cuts in the city's support to arts and culture programs will be devastating to the future of all arts and culture [inaudible] influence on people and families and their communities and beyond, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. The Bronx Children's Museum is already trusted in the Bronx and to be critical in the community as the community turns from pandemic to recovery. It's essential to the well-being of children and families of all, quality of life of all people living in the city not to cut CDS discretionary and expense funding. But now I'm reinventing what a children's museum would be like in the 21st century, with all [inaudible] museum with

and without walls. Without your leadership and help we won't be able to do it. We'll have to end our outreach programs that we're known for throughout the Bronx. We'll be unable to reach a new generation for our youngest and most vulnerable children. However, with your support we can consumer to the meet the needs of our borough's youngest constituents through our mobile museum that is accessible to all regardless age, ability or [inaudible]...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [inaudible] wrap up.

TAKISHA DOZIER: Culture is critical to community well-being, especially now dealing with this crisis. Thank you very much for your consideration during these unexpected times. Thanks for all you do in the community, Council Members [inaudible] and Ayala we see you. Thank you, everyone.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK. I have an announcement before we go on to our next, um, ah, panel, and also we have some statements from, um, Council Member Gibson and Council Member Van Bramer. So, um, I just want to ask everyone for their patience and to remind that we can see what panel we are up to next to the person's name who's giving

testimony. Um, so if you look [inaudible] you'll see. We just finished panel 17 and we are about halfway through the hearing. We estimate that we'll be here till pretty late tonight, but we will hear from everybody who stays on. So, ah, look at the P number next to your name. That will give you an idea [inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: [inaudible] I'm about to say something and then I'm done.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I can hear you, Jimmy, so.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hold off. All right, Vanessa Gibson, Chair Gibson, and then Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK. Thank you so much. Thank you Chair Dromm again. Um, I'm with you to the very end, I promise. Ah, I just wanted to thank Takisha and Carla and everyone at the Bronx Children's Museum. This has been a project that I have invested so much time and effort into because I believe in the concept. I am saddened that the Bronx, again, unfortunately, is the only borough right now without a children's museum and finally

we're going to see one. Unfortunately a little bit delayed due to COVID, but Takisha and Carla and the entire team have been phenomenonal with their programs and High Bridge, the afterschool programs, a lot of CASA funding that they receive, and even during COVID reminded that their work has continued remotely, working with children and families, keeping them active, engaged. We know that many of our children can fall into a depression being isolated in their homes all day, and I appreciate it that you bring smiles to their faces, you provide activities and so much recreation and learning, and you make it fun. So I want to thank you guys again. Takisha, you guys are amazing. I look forward to the opening of the children's museum. Council Member Diana Ayala and I and the Bronx delegation are super supportive and whatever we can do moving forward please know you can always count on our support. You are a part of the Bronx, a fabric, a cultural institution, even though you're on wheels, but I can't want to see you in a building. Thank you guys so much for your testimony today.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member Van Bramer, and Chair [inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Now I'm up. You, you heard me talking to my husband before because he was asking me when I would be finished.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ut-oh.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Not now [laughter].

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: [laughs] So, ah, I just want to say, ah, number one, thank you to all the cultural organizations who spoke and I, I made a point to obviously be here to listen to all of you speak, and, ah, ah, I want to thank you all for talking about the council initiatives and how helpful they are, CASA, Su Casa, the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and, and, ah, how much, ah, your organizations and your communities benefit from those, and obviously, ah, I care a great deal about them and there is no New York City without culture and the arts, um, and we know that you if you devastate the arts you devastate some of the communities that need culture and the arts the most and that have been deprived of those things the most. Right, we've got cultural deserts, ah, mostly in, ah, poorer and, um, ah, immigrant and black and brown communities, and a lot of council cultural

initiatives really have been targeted to make sure that we make sure that everyone has access to the arts, ah, regardless of their, ah, status or regardless of their ZIP code, ah, and that's something that, you know, we remain committed to. So, um, ah, thank you to, ah, everyone who came and spoke on behalf of culture and the arts, your specific organizations, but also, ah, just the general premise that I certainly support that, ah, you can't have a thriving, ah, New York City without a thriving cultural, ah, community and seeing so, ah, I'm certainly gonna fight as hard as I can with my colleagues to make sure that we get a budget that reflects the values of the city, which has got to include, ah, culture and the arts for everyone. So with that I will say thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council Member. And we'll now move to our next panel, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next panel will be Carol Evans, Clara Londono, Enrique Jerve, Eva Cornaka, Halley Yee, Juan Pinzon, and Lisa David.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CAROL EVANS: Carol Evans going. Hi, I'm Carol Evans. On behalf of Share and the more than...

UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible]

CAROL EVANS: ...220,000 women, yes, hi, that we serve every year, thank you for the council's outstanding support of Share's ambassador outreach program. Most recently with grants from the Cancer Initiative, the Speaker's Initiative, Healthy Aging and Support our Seniors Initiative, as well as through the public health [inaudible] the bilingual, ah, Ambassador Outreach Initiative directly serves 45,000 medically underserved black, Latina, and elderly women in every borough, ah, each year, ensuring that they have information and also tremendous support that they need for breast, ovarian, and metastatic breast cancer. The program was started by Share 25 years ago to address the healthcare disparities among women in low-income communities of color that have been well documented over the past decades. The program trains cancer survivors themselves to serve as advocates in their own communities. And Share also conducts tremendous outreach to seniors and now we are right now just now launching our outreach to uterine cancer patients, a

disease which greatly disproportionately affects black women. Numbers don't put a face on our work, though. 45,000 women is a lot. 225,000 women overall is huge. But let's talk about the difference we've made to humans individually. We've made a difference to the breast cancer survivor who had her daughter undergo genetic testing because she learned about it at a presentation that we made at a library in Queens. Or the young Latina who was saying that she was thinking about stopping...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CAROL EVANS: ...[inaudible] and we invited her to make sure she stayed with us. So just to, for you to know we've pivoted greatly in the coronavirus time. We appreciate the funding you've given us. It's essential to the work that we do in underserved communities in New York City. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Clara Londono.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

CLARA LONDONO: Good afternoon. I am Clara Londono. I am the community relation and outreach manager for [inaudible] Family Health Center in Corona, Queens. And I want to thank you, our

Council Members Dromm and Moya for your support in these difficult times and to New York City Council, ah, Speaker for your support to access health in New York City. I want to start talking about the kind of calls that I have been receiving during last two months. Pedro is an [inaudible] father of [inaudible] but he doesn't want to go to the hospital. The parent-teacher coordinator called me for help. He went to Plaza del Sol where he was referred and hospitalized at [inaudible] Hospital as he knew [inaudible] that it would be covered and his family would be safe. Maria lost her partner because of the COVID and she didn't know how to get food and help with the [inaudible]. She now, she now is alone with four kids. Juana, Jeanette, [inaudible] for the babies. Pedro, Juan, and other seniors need food. Who will be [inaudible] if we are not here for them? Plaza del Sol have been working with this initiative since 2015 until now. We are seeing, we are working and participating in 524 events and we had reached more than 36,000 people with education, nutrition, well-being resources, to [inaudible] educational participation and [inaudible] information, and providing a support system for our community. Until

now we are open. We are the, one of the only medical centers in Corona, Queens for the low-income and [inaudible] and immigrant...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CLARA LONDONO: ...[inaudible] since the starting of this crisis. We want to thank you for your support and we want to let you know that we are a group of organizations [inaudible] that work for our communities. It is not one effort. This [inaudible] has the biggest chance to provide to the city, to the legislators, and to the community-based organization to have a group of leaders, a community [inaudible] help and to [inaudible] with the low-income population and with the plus that we are motivated, with experience in grassroots work. We have been receiving the [inaudible] and policy changes and resources during the time of this initiative, and we are always helping with the new challenges, and we are trusted by the [inaudible]. Thank you so much for your support, and we want to continue with that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Clara [speaking in Spanish] Daniel Dromm [speaking in Spanish] thank you so much.

CLARA LONDONO: Gracias, Councilman.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Enrique Jerve.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

ENRIQUE JERVE: Ah, good afternoon everyone. I hope you are doing well. My name is Enrique Jerve. I am the [inaudible] program director. I am providing this testimony [inaudible] support to restore the Article 6 budget cut. As you are currently aware, the codes of the Article 6 will have a significant impact on the city's Access Health Initiative. The budget cut is nearly the [inaudible] for HIV intervention services, in part the maternal care support. [inaudible] and now COVID-19 health care resources that the city needs. Access Care Initiative has [inaudible] to create more than 100 additional [inaudible] since 2015 and created [inaudible] more than 10,000 clients who are not eligible to receive health insurance [inaudible] community-based organizations personnel are doing whatever they can to navigate this pandemic. They are [inaudible] effects from this pandemic. It is why now that many of us are facing issues such as PTSD because we have lost a family member, a

[inaudible], or a colleague [inaudible] access during this crisis. Many of us are becoming more susceptible each day to trauma to the struggle resulting from the lack of testing, the courage, and now the [inaudible] loss of funding that is needed to provide the essential services. Before the [inaudible] COVID-19 virus pandemic communities were already vulnerable to illness such as but not limited to the pressure, substance abuse, and negative patterns, such as high suicide rates. Now with the mental health issues that we are feeling we are prone to trauma whether [inaudible] due to this pandemic. For example...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ENRIQUE JERVE: OK. So, ah, I would like to request to restore the cuts. We have provided information to [inaudible] communities and also we [inaudible] to provide the services. Thank you for your time. And more information is provided in my written testimony. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, appreciate it, Enrique. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Eva Cornaka.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

EVA CORNAKA: I'm so sorry.

UNIDENTIFIED: Give me one second.

EVA CORNAKA: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED: You were, you were just unmuted.

EVA CORNAKA: Yes, I'm unmuted, thank you, thank you, I'm sorry. Ah, good afternoon, good evening, and my name is Eva Cornaka. I'm the executive director at [inaudible] organized to minister to our community. Ah, we're a nonprofit in Queens. We serve predominantly the Polish immigrant community for over 40 years, but we're open to everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. Today I'd like to testify in support of the Access Health Initiative and the [inaudible] Initiative, and ask the council for continued funding. Um, the health care, we don't have to explain health care. We all know that this is a priority right now, considered as essential for, for us, for most of our clients. Um, these initiatives are incredible. They give us the opportunity to go out to the community, do healthcare presentations, workshops, educate the community. Um, some people just leave and they have reliable information. Some come back because they

have one-on-one issues. And just, just to illustrate, I don't want to give you numbers, just a short story, um, of this amazing young woman who, ah, lost her partner, ah, in a, in a tragic accident. She's pregnant, she's single, she's young. Ah, she's eligible for Medicaid, but she was told that she, ah, if she enrolls she will be liable for all of her bills, he prenatal care, her, ah, hospital bills when she delivers the baby. She did not see a doctor until she was in her second trimester, ah, which, which is, in my opinion, I mean, that should never happen. Um, once we started working with her we got her enrolled in Medicaid. We, we were able to enroll her in SNAP, WIC, um, other...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

EVA CORNAKA: Um, I'm just, I'm just wrapping. There are so many other people that are clueless of what's out there. There are so many other Marthas out there, ah, regardless of the race, um, background, ethnic background, community. Um, if, if programs like these will, ah, cease to exist who's gonna, ah, assist them? Nobody, nobody, 'cause there's nobody out, out there, besides nonprofits

like us. Community-based nonprofits. Thank you so much for this opportunity. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Halley Yee.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

HALLEY YEE: Hi, my name is Halley Yee. I'm a policy coordinator at CACF Coalition for Asian American children and family. Um, I'd like to thank the council for holding this hearing and providing an opportunity for our community members to have their voices heard during such an unprecedented budget process. Um, I'm testifying on behalf of Access Health New York City, a critical program that supports community-based organizations that provide culturally competent and language accessible outreach to, um, the city's hard-to-reach populations with vital information on accessing health care and health coverage. Each of the organizations awarded funding under Access Health play an invaluable role in providing critical, um, complex, rapidly changing, highly technical information to communities that are deeply affected by fear and instability, especially with the public charge and now COVID-19. As [inaudible] organization, CACF and our partners play a significant role in the coordination and capacity

building afforded through this initiative. Already m marginalized communities are disproportionately hardest hit at this moment. On top of facing job loss and poverty, many families remain underinsured, uninsured, undocumented, and ineligible for unemployment or the federal stimulus, um, provided to individuals and families. Vulnerable communities are dying of COVID-19 at a higher rate than anyone else in New York City. Their access to health service is more important than ever, but it's threatened by a lack of trustworthy information sources and the persistent fear of an anti-immigrant federal government. Access Health empowers our trusted CBOs to provide culturally responsive and accurate information to ensure that all New Yorkers understand their rights to health care coverage and services. The initiative's value is clearer than ever as the pandemic disproportionately impacted the communities serves by our 31 organizations across the five boroughs. It is now more critical than ever that the council restore Access Health fully at its 2-1/2 million dollars and provide any and all backfill necessary to Article 6 funds to make public health programs like Access Health whole. We thank you for

your dedication and service, especially at this time, and hope you are staying as safe and well as possible. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Juan Pinzon.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JUAN PINZON: Good evening. My name is Juan Pinzon. I'm the director of health campaigns and [inaudible]. Um, thank you for the opportunity, ah, to testify today in support of the Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program, which is part of the Access Health NYC Initiative, which we also strongly support. Ah, now more than ever New Yorkers need help understanding their insurance and access to care options and solution to problems, accessing coverage and care because of financial barriers. Ah, for New York City's communities of color and immigrants that need is even greater because we have a healthcare system that has inadequate cultural and linguistic competence and is [inaudible] due to policies that are permeated with structural racism. [inaudible] and the entire Access Health NYC needs significant help, right the wrongs of the disparities in our healthcare system, and [inaudible] provides much-

needed health advocacy to clients whose medical needs have become increasingly unmet by an overwhelmed healthcare system and it also an invaluable resource for New Yorkers who have lost their job coverage. Over one million New Yorkers have lost, ah, ah, their job-based coverage, people who were previously uninsured, or cannot afford care and need an advocate who can help them understand their options and resolve coverage and access to care [inaudible] during this pandemic. [inaudible] provided services to a network of 12 CBOs who are providing present services in 15 languages in every borough and a health line [inaudible] which actually has continued to answer calls, ah, from consumers with a 95% live answer rate. The program was first established in 1998 by the, we got the funding during the Great Recession. Thanks to the New York City Council support from Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm, and Chair Levine and all members of the council. The program was relaunched in February and within less than four months we have been able to serve 100 New Yorkers. More than 80% of these clients are people of color. The current funding is insufficient to adequately serve [inaudible] currently covers, so we

respectfully ask the council to [inaudible] our current funding of $500,000 and if possible increase it to $700,000 to ensure that New York City residents...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JUAN PINZON: ...[inaudible] an experience to [inaudible] help them understand coverage and access health care during this crisis and beyond. I also respectfully ask ah, ah, the council to keep Access Health NYC's funding whole at 2.5 million. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lisa David.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

LISA DAVID: Can you hear me?

UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

LISA DAVID: Yes, OK. Good evening, everyone. Um, delighted to be here. Thank you, Chair Dromm and Gibson and Speaker and the members of the Finance Committee, delighted to be here. Um, I want to just, you know, obviously I'm hoping that, ah, the organization can continue to be funded. Let me just give you a brief, brief overview. Um, I'm, I'm CEO and president of Public Health Solutions. We

serve low-income and immigrant communities in all five boroughs, um, and we provide access to, to the nutrition, SNAP, and WIC programs. We enroll people in health insurance. Um, we do reproductive health, we do a lot of home visiting for pregnant women and young families, as well as tobacco control and HIV work. Um, so our direct services, um, are serving communities extremely hard hit by COVID. We've had to do a complete, ah, recharacterization of the work we do to be remote, and I gotta tell you we're seeing a lot of demand and a lot of new people who've never relied on government services coming in. But what I want to say is, um, ah, the people who have been hardest hit by inequities and sort of the, the racial inequities that exist in our system are now doubly damaged, um, because of COVID and, um, I just want to say we've done a survey of all of the communities that we serve and over 90% of black, Latinx, Asian commissions, their biggest concern is they don't have enough money to last for 30 days. Um, and the biggest things on their list are 75% say they're worried about getting food on the table, but they're worried about paying their rent, their utilities, their other credit card bills, having access to

health care. So I just want to take us back to basics. Um, the community-based organizations that provide...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

LISA DAVID: ...[inaudible] are, are falling apart, layoffs, furloughs, consolidations, and we've just not, need to go back to basics to make sure that the core organizations providing basic needs are covered through this crisis.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be David Kleghorn, Chris Widelo, Laura Mascuch, Arlo Monell Chase, Jackie Delvalle, and Joanne Page.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

DAVID KLEGHORN: Hi, my name is David Kleghorn. I'm the chief housing officer at Help USA and on behalf of Health I'm grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony on the capital budget. Help USA operates family and adult transitional housing and shelter programs, supportive services programs, and builds, operates, and provides support services and permanent housing sites in New York City. Help also develops permanent support housing in six other states and the District of

Columbia. In total, we have almost 2000 full-time employees, over 1300 in New York City and 80 of those are directly related to the permanent, ah, to the provision of permanent supportive housing. The state budget cuts loom and the federal support remains uncertain. The 40% cut to the capital budget for fiscal year 20 and 38% to the capital budget in fiscal 21 comes as another blow. Help has several important projects that were set to [inaudible] in fiscal 20 and 21. Home Simpson is a 72-unit supportive housing project in the Bronx that has a 1550 contract, 9% tax credits from the state, supportive housing loan funds HPD, and was scheduled to close around now in May of 2020. Additionally, our development partner is a church whose sanctuary space has since been demolished as part of the pre-development for this project. They will need to continue to find other space for the foreseeable future at great expense to them. We have a cluster project in the Bronx, which was part of the mayor's initiative to close cluster shelter sites and regain, ah, control of properties that were held by predatory landlords. Help USA operates five of these buildings in the Bronx since April 2019. The buildings are in

very poor shape and take a tremendous amount of money just to deal with the constant emergencies. The project has been closed, has been scheduled to close on financing for the renovation in the fall of 2020, ah, but right now we don't, we don't have any real guidance from HPD on it, whether or not that will be able to happen. There's 90 total units. Most of them are formerly homeless and require significant support services. And finally our, ah, Help One project, which was approved, ah, through the ULURP...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

DAVID KLEGHORN: ...[inaudible]. Sorry, um, that project is a buy deal that is supposed close in December of 2020 and we have no real sense of the timing on that. Um, we have the, the, in addition to, um, the, the, ah, lack of being able to close on these projects and create the jobs that come with providing supportive housing, um, and maintenance supportive housing and property management, it's a financial burden for the nonprofits who have expensed significant money on, um, predevelopment cost prior to closing to not have any sense of ability to be able to plan. Ah, I'll stop. Ah, thank you for the

opportunity. Um, I'll be happy to take any questions offline. Thanks.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chris Widelo.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CHRIS WIDELO: Chairman Dromm and members of the committee, ah, for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Chris Widelo and I'm the, ah, external affairs director for NYSAFAH. We are a trade association for New York's affordable housing industry and we have nearly 400 members statewide. The COVID pandemic has upended every aspect of New York City life and governance and, ah, you know, there's been so much impact for all these people who have lost lives and their families that are affected. It's really created an endless series of ripple effects that are social, economic, and financial. Ah, the affordable housing industry is no exception. It has been touched in many ways, and while the market rate resident family building stock has seen better than expected rent collection numbers so far, the same is not true for the affordable housing portfolio. Our members' projects house New Yorkers who are more economically vulnerable with less in savings than average and tend to have older and

lower-income tenants. Due to the restricted rents the buildings have thinner profit margins and are more threatened by sudden reductions of cash flow. Meanwhile, on the construction side, projects have slowed considerably and are getting [inaudible] in getting completed despite essential work status. Sites undertook safety measures, which greatly reduced the amount of work that could be completed and how many workers could be on site to complete it. Materials were delayed in traveling from other areas of the country and a lot of inspections and benchmarks from other agencies or utilities have also been delayed. New York City had an affordable housing crisis prior to COVID-19 and it will have a greater, more dire need for safe and affordable housing when we emerge on the other side of this pandemic. NYSAFAH has worked with HPD to voluntarily take on greater share of homeless families into buildings that are currently leasing up or will soon lease up. More than ever, people need a safe, clean way out of shelters and out of overcrowded or substandard living conditions elsewhere, and they need it fast. The capital cuts proposed by HPD's budget will put the brakes on a robust, affordable,

and supportive housing pipeline and compromise our members...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHRIS WIDELO: ...[inaudible] to bring units online for low-income New Yorkers. Lost revenue and woefully inadequate federal supports thus far have left us with frightening, with a frightening budget outlook. We fully understand the reality of the situation. We ask that you please make every effort to target the cuts in areas that will not impact New Yorkers who are most impacted and most vulnerable to this health crisis, seniors, the homeless, low-income families, and those for whom a rent-restricted new housing unit would literally be life changing. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Laura Mascuch.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

LAURA MASCUCH: Hi, my name is Laura Mascuch. I'm the executive director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York. Thank you so much for allowing me to testify tonight. The Supportive Housing Network of New York is a membership organization representing over 200

nonprofit developers and social service providers. Supportive housing is permanent housing with onsite support services for vulnerable New Yorkers, for homeless, and living with a special need, and integrated with affordable housing units in the building as well. We recognize the uphill battle recovery from COVID will be, from an economic perspective and, most importantly, from a public health perspective. However, it is clear that our road to recovery must prioritize affordable housing. With homelessness on the rise, we must move chronically homeless New Yorkers out of shelter and into supportive housing in order to relieve a system that is already strained and likely to become more so. [inaudible] is on track to close over 2500 units of supportive and affordable housing through the Supportive Housing Loan Program. An additional 400-plus units of supportive housing are in the pipeline through HPD's ELLA and SARA programs. We are now watching the pipeline grind to a halt with no deals closing before the end of the fiscal year and an unclear path for FY21. If the city follows through with 40% cuts to the capital budget it will put these deals in jeopardy and slow, if not reverse, the

progress the city has made. This [inaudible] will be quickly eaten up by cost in the shelter, hospitals, and jail systems. We must all agree on something. Housing is health care and a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home is the first line of defense in protecting vulnerable communities. Without a continued significant investment in the development of housing for homeless New Yorkers the city will see all of its efforts to decrease the shelter and treat homeless populations fail and risk future spikes of COVID fatalities. We thank you...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

LAURA MASCUCH: ...[inaudible] for testifying.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Arlo Monell Chase.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

ARLO MONELL CHASE: Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Arlo Chase, senior vice president with Services for the Underserved. I'd like to first acknowledge the chair, as well as Council Member Gibson, who's been a long-standing friend to SUS [inaudible] as well as my own council member, Brad Lander, and Council Member

Levin. SUS is one of the largest not-for-profit social service and housing organizations in New York City. Every year we help over 35,000 New Yorkers [inaudible] including veterans, people in shelters, and people with disabilities. A vast majority of our 2500 employees are frontline, essential healthcare workers. They are risking their lives every day, wearing protective gear, and going into [inaudible]. Our portfolio of housing includes over 40 apartment buildings, 50 group homes for people with developmental disabilities, and over 20 shelters. We have, ah, I wanted to testify in particular on the HPD cuts to the capital budget that we wanted to share and the others who were just mentioning it. SUS had two projects that were supposed to close in this fiscal year, both of which are currently on pause with no end in sight. These are not just deals or transactions. These would represent 262 new apartments for people facing homelessness, people leaving shelters, families surviving domestic violence, and affordable housing for low-income New Yorkers. These include, both of these projects are, ah, RFPs that SUS won. One was an M/WBE RFP with Alabama Ave in East New York with our co-developer,

CD Emmanuel, and one was on a NYCHA site [inaudible] air rights project in the Melrose section of the Bronx with our partner...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ARLO MONELL CHASE: ...[inaudible]. I appreciate the opportunity to testify, but, ah, cutting HPD's budget by 40% is extremely short-sighted and will only result in more emergency spending. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jackie Delvalle.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

JACKIE DELVALLE: Hi, good, it's really great to see all of you here. Ah, thank you so much. Um, ah, my name is Jackie Delvalle and I work at [inaudible] Justice. Um, and just thanks again for everyone, all you're doing to keep the city safe and on track in your ongoing support. I'm here to testify on behalf of the Stabilizing NYC Initiative which is 20 organizations strong, and we provide direct action organizing, advocacy, and legal services for tenants grappling with predatory and speculative landlords. Predatory landlord behavior did not stop because of COVID-19 and low-income

tenants of color that we work with were already very vulnerable. Mass homelessness, lack of access to health care, child care, and other consequences of the loss of income emerge as some of the longer-term threats and challenges we expect our community will face in the coming year. An estimates 25% of New Yorkers did not pay rent this May. Um, shifting, we shifted to virtual meetings and calls and coalition members are actively working with tenant associations facing illegal construction and under, and very unsafe conditions as they shelter in place. Um, our coalition has also been a lifeline for hundreds of New Yorkers. Over the past five years that we've been funded in the council we've built a really strong network of tenant associations and tenant leaders, and we've been able to pivot with all them. We do wellness checks and we connected parents to educational resources and help people figure out how they're gonna pay rent, help people apply for unemployment. We've translated a lot of materials. We've gotten census outreach and we've been listening and learning and, and grieving together. And, um, we know that the city is in a challenge financial position, but communities most impacted by COVID-19

are communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JACKIE DEVALLE: ...[inaudible] the budget. Discretionary funding is how small organizations closer to New Yorkers and organizations led by people of color get access to public funding. Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Jackie.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Joanne Page.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

JOANNE PAGE: I want to first thank you for the courage that this council has shown in putting together the pieces necessary to close Riker's Island. Working Society is a 50-plus-year-old organization that serves about 8000 people a year with a whole range of services for people who were formerly incarcerated [inaudible] to incarceration, employment, and housing. Budget is a moral document and this coming budget will shape New York City for the next generation. I want to talk about two things. I want to talk about affordable and supportive housing and why it matters so much, and I want to talk about protecting our nonprofit

1 2 providers. More than half the people released to New
3 York City from Department of Corrections on a state
4 level are dumped in the city shelters. That was true
5 before COVID. We are going to see an explosion of
6 homelessness and we already have homelessness at a
7 level during the Great Depression. Creation of
8 affordable and supportive housing saves lives and it
9 saves money. For homeless people, it keeps people
10 out of shelters. It keeps people out of jails and
11 build lives. There is an incredible opportunity New
12 York City could have [inaudible] this crisis and lack
13 of supportive housing. And affordable housing, the
14 [inaudible] is going to be more available. If we
15 don't do it now we will lose an opportunity
16 [inaudible] generations, and what we're seeing is 40%
17 cut in HPD for this year and next year. That's just
18 something we cannot accept. And I want to turn my
19 attention to nonprofits. [inaudible] nonprofits are
20 on the edge, that one in five are on the edge of
21 insolvency, that 40% had virtually no cash reserves
22 before COVID. And nonprofits are the front line
23 [inaudible] most vulnerable in New York City.
24 Progress has been made. We've been part of the
25

nonprofit resilience committee work. We've seen a change in covering full...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JOANNE PAGE: ...[inaudible], we see the road to modified contracts, but do not give human services providers across the board cuts for some of your most important resources will no longer exist. Give us the room to be flexible and to use our resources wisely. Let us use the PPP to build reserves, to build flexible funding, and most of all please pay us on time. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, Joanne. It's good to see you, and thank you for all the good work you're doing. Say hello to Stanley.

JOANNE PAGE: [laughs]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The next panel will be Wayne Ho, Mario Russell, Matthew Chin, Jose Payeras, Abdullah Younus, Elana Roman, and Andrea Bowen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

WAYNE HO: This is Carlyn Cowen on behalf of Wayne Ho. My pronouns are they/them. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today during what is a marathon budget session. [inaudible]

2 opened its doors in 1965 to welcome new immigrants to
3 the city. 55 years later we are in the midst of one
4 of the biggest crisis our community has faced. 50%
5 of our community members have lost their jobs and
6 income and many don't qualify for any kind of relief.
7 Community members are avoiding seeking testing or
8 treatment because of the cost or because they are
9 afraid they will get deported. Community members are
10 getting sick in overcrowded housing. They can't
11 afford rent and they're facing eviction. Some of our
12 young people are rationing food for their families
13 and have shared suicidal thoughts with our staff
14 because they don't know how they will afford to bury
15 their parents right now. Yet in all of this we're
16 again facing a budget fight where social services
17 that serve these community members are being cut. At
18 CPC alone we are facing 2 million dollars in cuts
19 from our budget in the last six weeks, laying off 250
20 staff in the coming six weeks, and losing programming
21 for over 1500 community members. Our staff have been
22 declared as essential workers, but are on the front
23 lines without hazard pay or PPE, and some of our own
24 staff have died. We know that their work has always
25 been essential and will continue to be essential to

our recovery. But we need the support to actually get to that recovery. So we're in a moment where we can either say that we care about hardest hit communities and then balance the budget on the backs of communities of color, immigrants, and low-income New Yorkers anyway, or we can actually pass a budget that's a statement of our values. Let's pass an antiracist budget, one that doesn't support the policing and incarceration of communities of color, that pulls the NYPD out of our schools and our subways and invest that money in social services that actually help our communities thrive. Let's pass the sanctuary budget that provides support for immigrants who are the front lines of this crisis, yet shut out of relief efforts, and support for the programs...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CARLYN COWEN: ...[inaudible] provides hotels for the homeless. Let's pass a future-thinking budget that invests in education and programming for our young people, like SYEP, Beacon, and COMPASS. And let's pass a just budget, one that raises revenues from those that can afford it, divest from institutions that harm our communities, and prioritizes the programs and social services that

help our communities survive and thrive. Our communities can't afford anything less. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, good to see you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mario Russell.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

MARIO RUSSELL: Good evening, Chairman Dromm and, and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. Thank you very much. Um, Mario Russell with Catholic Charities Immigrant Refugee Services. Um, I'm grateful for your stamina. I'm grateful for your commitment, and I'm grateful for your attention tonight. Um, I'm here to ask you to, to hold steady discretionary funding for unaccompanied minor defense programming, for ESL instruction, and to commitment to sustain to further future legal defense programming for separated families, for children in New York schools, and for important, um, referral programming through our city-run hotlines. Ah, you've heard testimony today from our executive leadership about the impact of COVID-19 on immigrants, refugees. That is lasting, disproportionate, harsh. Our work with immigrants and refugees has a long history and it's extensive as

it is deep. Through legal services, resettlement, detention work, integration, ESL, clinical programming, family reunification, children defense, unaccompanied minors defense, and court defense services, including, of course, also extensive hotline programming with over 86,000 calls and 28,000 immigrants and refugees served each year. That is to say these are the people who I think we'd call our new ancestors. They're the ones who will shape our history, our economy, and our culture. I don't need to remind this council, but I need to say this again, that the onslaught of COVID-19 in March of 2020 was preceded by more than three years of sustained legal, social, and economic assaults on immigrant families and vulnerable newcomers. The Trump administration in effect created a pre-existing condition on immigrants that rendered them even more vulnerable to the many effects of COVID-19. And so to close, without federal help...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARIO RUSSELL: ...without government intervention, this is really where you can find a role for immigrants, for refugees. It is for these reasons that we urge the council today renew its

2 discretionary spending commitments in these areas.
3 Let me just say this. The bottom line is simple.
4 This council has always demonstrated its belief in
5 fundamental truth of what immigrants and refugees are
6 for this city and for this nation and has always put
7 its action behind words. The bottom line here is
8 without funding over 2000 New York cases will be
9 [inaudible] orphan and over 75,000 people seeking
10 referrals and network connections will lose that
11 going forward. The work that we do, the work that
12 you do, is patient, but it's the real work of
13 integration, of welcome, and of building a just and
14 compassionate society. In a time of crisis, now, I
15 remind you of this sacred work which you must not
16 abandon, but actually must stand by more than ever.
17 Thank you for your time.
18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks, Mario.
19 Catholic Charities is doing great work. Thank you.
20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Matthew Chin.
21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.
22 MATTHEW CHIN: Hi, my name is Matthew
23 Chin and I'm from Charles B. Wang Community Health
24 Center, which is a federally qualified health center
25 in Manhattan and Queens. Last year we served over

60,000 patients, 88% of which are at or below 200% of the poverty level and 83% are best served in a language other than English. I'm testifying today on behalf of the Coalition Against Smoking in Immigrant Communities. This coalition is comprised of community-based organizations seeking funds to support a citywide expansion of the tobacco use navigator model program. We aim to reduce smoking disparities in foreign-born, limited-English-proficient populations by allowing community health workers to educate and connect smokers to culturally competent cessation resources. Among the Chinese immigrant community, smoking is extremely prevalent. There are approximately 78,000 foreign-born Chinese smokers in the city, and Chinese-speaking Asian males have almost twice the odds of being smokers than their English-speaking counterparts. This is reflected in the city's health outcome trends, as lung cancer deaths increased 70% among ethnically Chinese New Yorkers from 2000 to 2014, while decreasing 16% for New Yorkers as a whole during the same period. Most relevant to today, smoking history has been identified as a risk factor associated with coronavirus infections progressing to severe illness.

2 A recent NIH study found smoking nearly doubles the
3 rate of COVID-19 progression to more critical
4 conditions or death. This is an especially
5 concerning social justice issue as New York City's
6 communities of color have the highest rates of
7 smoking and the highest rates of COVID-19 morbidity
8 and mortality. Ah, I know at, at the moment the
9 budget is tight. Um, but we believe this is also a
10 highly cost-effective program compared to lung cancer
11 treatments. Our organization is requesting $100,000
12 for our tobacco navigators and health educators to
13 educate and connect to approximately 200 smokers and
14 e-cigarette users to cessation treatment. Thank you
15 for your testimony and I'm happy to answer
16 [inaudible].
17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I quit 29
19 years ago. Thank you.
20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jose Payeras.
21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.
22 JOSE PAYERAS: Good evening, Chairman
23 Dromm, Council Member Carlos Menchaca, members of the
24 Finance Committee. On behalf of New York Committee
25 Empowerment, NYCE, I thank you for the opportunity to

2 testify at today's hearing. My name is Jose Payeras
3 and I am the worker center associate for NYCE. As a
4 former construction worker and active member of this
5 organization, I have experienced firsthand the
6 constant struggles our community faces. I am here
7 today to speak on behalf of the day laborer work
8 force initiative that supports expansion and
9 development of day laborer centers, which are in most
10 need [inaudible] more essential than ever before.
11 NYCE Center is located in central Queens, the
12 epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. Up until mid
13 March our members, who generally work in some of the
14 most dangerous and precarious industries, gathered at
15 our center to organize their jobs and receive
16 critical services, including training and safety and
17 legal rights [inaudible] their cases. But the virus
18 hit and the [inaudible] forced us to transform our
19 job center into a disaster relief center. We
20 immediately began distributing food to day laborers
21 and others in the community. But we knew that the
22 situation required a more comprehensive and long-term
23 [inaudible]. So we started to reaching out to our
24 workers and trying to support them with the
25 [inaudible] that we were facing, providing important

2 information that many of them may have not received
3 otherwise. In the first month we reached out over
4 500 members and then the virus was spreading quickly
5 and [inaudible] entire households. We saw that the
6 virus incited a new and cruel level of fear and
7 uncertainty. Many were scared to go to the doctor,
8 and the majority had their income and savings
9 decimated. A recent survey of ours shows that 40%
10 are at risk of becoming homeless as a result of all
11 this. During the pandemic NYCE has continued
12 [inaudible] trainings and Know Your Rights workshops
13 to [inaudible] the dangerous and quickly changing
14 conditions. We're very concerned that the urgency
15 that members feel to go back to work will place them
16 in more danger...
17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
18 JOSE PAYERAS: ...[inaudible] or
19 deportations. We cannot emphasize more how critical
20 the day laborer work force initiative will be as day
21 laborers start to reenter the work force in large
22 numbers and are at incredible high risk of workplace
23 abuse, exploitation, and unsafe conditions. Thank
24 you very much for your time and for the opportunity
25 to testify today.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Jose. I'm very proud to be able to represent you in the City Council, and you are doing fantastic work. Thank you [inaudible] work, thank you.

JOSE PAYERAS: Thank you, Chair.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Abdullah Younus.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

ABDULLAH YOUNUS: Ah, good evening. Ah, my name is Abdullah Younus. I'm the director of political engagement at the New York Immigration Coalition, a policy and advocacy organization that represents over 200 immigrant-serving member organizations statewide. Thank you to Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm, and the members of the City Council Finance Committee for giving us the opportunity to submit testimony. We join the members of communities [inaudible] Communities United for Police Reform in calling for NYPD cuts and using savings to bolster the recovery of our low-income and immigrant commissions. I will identify a few of the top line asks in [inaudible] America United campaign. The rest can be found on our website, nyic.org. One, create an emergency cash assistance fund for those New Yorkers left out of the federal relief packages.

Analysis by ANHD finds that the cost of matching the one-time payment amount stipulated by the CARES Act for all undocumented New Yorkers would be 578 million dollars. If the city were to match the need for mixed-status families the total cost would reach 1.2 billion dollars. Two, restore and baseline 12 million dollars for adult literacy funding to address the immense inequalities, ah, and, ah, gaps between immigrant parents and many other New Yorkers, which is preventing immigrant children from accessing remote learning. Three, renew 58.2 million in funding for immigrant legal services to ensure continuity of services and to help defend immigrants. Once again, thank you for allowing me to testify. We look forward to continuing to work with you all to come up with solutions that ensure that everyone recovers from this, the threat of this virus. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Elana Roman.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

ELENA ROMAN: Hi, good. Thank you, Chairperson Dromm and council members. Um, during this unprecedented public health crisis I'm urging the council today to support renewed funding for the

Immigrant Health Initiative, which has saved lives and improved health across the city. My name is Elana Roman and I'm a senior staff attorney in the Health Justice program at the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, where I work to ensure that undocumented immigrants have access to health care. NYLPI is privileged to be a part of the City Council's Immigrant Health Initiative and we thank you for that support. Ah, at a time when access to medical care and information is crucial and misinformation can endanger our communities, this support has allowed us to expand our work educating immigrant New Yorkers with serious health conditions, their healthcare providers and legal services providers about how to access health care and how to stay safe. We have responded directly to community needs for medical and legal information and partnering with the New York Immigration Coalition, created and staffed with Facebook Live educational panel with doctors and lawyers to answer questions on how to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus and implications of the public charge rule. The panel was entirely in Spanish and reached over 3000 New Yorkers, and continues to be available to communities

2 online. Through your funding we provide legal
3 services and our individual cases are complex, ah,
4 given that we deal with clients in health emergencies
5 who are stuck between two complicated bureaucratic
6 systems, immigration and health care. We have
7 developed a nuanced practice, taking the cases no one
8 else can. The health immigrant, health, Immigrant
9 Health Initiative funding also supports, ah, our
10 working to continue improve access to health care in
11 immigration detention facilities. In March our
12 medical providers' network, along with allies, and
13 over 4700 healthcare professionals sent an open
14 letter to ICE advocating the release of people from
15 immigration detention to help stop the spread of
16 COVID-19. [inaudible] a report that documents
17 serious, often life-threatening deficiencies in the
18 medical care provided to New Yorkers in areas...
19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
20 ELENA ROMAN: ...[inaudible] detention
21 facilities. Ah, I'd like to just take this time to
22 really thank you all. Ah, thank you, Chairperson
23 Dromm and the committee members for giving us this
24 opportunity, for your endurance today, it's been a
25 long day for you all. Um, and just for your

tremendous assistance, and we really ask that, ah, the funding continue in fiscal year 2021 for both NYLPI and our partners. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. Endurance, we're taking bets on how long we go tonight so, ah, we'll see [laughs]. Thank you. And thank you, Abdullah, too.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Andrea Bowen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Andy, you there? Andrea?

ANDREA BOWEN: Can you hear me better now?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

ANDREA BOWEN: My son stuck, um, my microphone in his mouth, so, um, that didn't help. Um, my name is Andrea Bowen, principle of Bowen Public Affairs Consulting. Thank you, Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, Chair Menchaca, Council Members, ah, Adams, Holden, and Grodenchik, and staff of the Committees on Finance and Immigration, and the Subcommittee of Capital Budget for this hearing. I'm making budget requests on behalf of several clients and causes. Written testimony includes fact sheets

on these asks. On behalf of the New York City Antiviolence Project and along with other legal services providers, I ask for $800,000 in funding to providers of immigration legal services for transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary, or TGNCNB people. TGNCNB immigrants have been especially hard hit by COVID-19 because make in service industry jobs or in jobs off the books. But only a small number of providers provide affirming immigration legal services to this community. On behalf of the council, family and child caring agencies are [inaudible] are, main long-term goal is to work towards pay parity for contracted ACS workers compared with ACS staff, and this season specifically we're asking the council work with the administration to avoid cuts to preventive services, which are frequently cut in hard budgetary times. A major aspect of not cutting preventative, preventive, is restoring summer program services. Summer programs fund staff lines that undertake child welfare functions, and we can't leave these staff who protect children and strengthen families without income for the summer. Ah, on behalf of the New York City network of worker cooperatives, I request that you

continue funding for the Worker Cooperative Development Initiative, or WCDI. Finally, as a volunteer planning board member of the American LGBTQ+ Museum, we ask for small contributions from council members to continue our momentum in building a museum that can hold the stories and material culture of LGBTQI peoples who are ready to capture a generation's worth of, um, moving community history before it's too late. Thank you for your time, and I welcome any questions.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Andrea, thank you very much.

ANDREA BOWEN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be Madaha Kinsey-Lamb, Katie Dean, Mateo Vidals, Mack Graham, Giovanna Aragon Benola, and Bob Monahan.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MADAHA KINSEY LAMB: Good evening, Chair Gibson and all of you dedicated leaders of New York City participating here. I am Madaha Kinsey-Lamb, executive director and founder of Mind Builders Creative Arts Center in the northeast Bronx. And we are also one of the 42-member organizations of the

Coalition of Theaters of Color. CTC is a cohort of New York City-based nonprofit theaters founded in 2004 by the late cultural icons Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. Why? To address the systemic inequities culturally specific theaters face. Now in all five boroughs our institutions represent the artistry and cultures of a growing majority of New Yorkers who provide robust services, employment, training, and public good to all of our residents. Yet we receive 1/10 of 1% of the total funds awarded for arts and culture in New York. Through the coalition's 17 years of activity and the generous recognition by the City Council, today's New York City theaters of color had achieved a vital safety net through the council's CTC Initiative. However, the impact of COVID-19 on the arts and culture sector and on black and brown communities has been devastating. For many canceling every theatrical production and an array of programs and events across the city has already had catastrophic effect. Many CTC organizations truly may not survive without your support and this initiative, drastically shifting the landscape of our field for many years to come. Mind Builders, as a member of CTC, is located in the area that the *New*

York Times just ranked as second-highest in New York City of people infected. We have counted on receiving our FY20 New York City contract funds as we've continued all of our music, dance, and drama programs virtually and for free for 700 youth. Artistic...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MADAHA KINSEY LAMB: ...[inaudible] programming by 42 CTC organizations like ours are vital engines in our communities for jobs, mental health, activism, empowering messages, and referral to other vital services. The centuries of struggle continues and we are counting on your support.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mack Graham.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MACK GRAHAM: How ya doing? My name is Mack Graham and I'm a development manager at [inaudible] around for about 20 years and we are a national leader in mentoring. Um, we served, we created and serve 33,000 mentoring relationships. Um, we, we currently serve 4110 students across, um, the five boroughs and we are looking to grow. 97% of our students identify as students of color. Um, 90% of our students qualifies for free and reduced lunch

and 62% of our students will be the first in their student, in their, in their families to graduate, ah, go to college. IMentor students enroll in college at a rate 20 points higher than their peers, which is 78% versus the 58% of New York City students. Um, IMentor, IMentor students also graduate, um, graduate college at nearly double the rate which, um, than their peers, which is 48% versus 21%. At the onset of this pandemic our team immediately adapted our programming to, um, support our students in mentor [inaudible] cares. Because IMentor has, has always had a virtual component to our programming we were uniquely able to adapt our services to, to adjust to the distant learning mandates. Um, we've also was able to leverage our, um, individualized connections with our students to help them adjust to this, um, online schooling. Um, to ensure that students are academically sound throughout the summer, we are, we are adding additional advisor sessions and to be more strategic in our support with, to our students and mentors. Um, and we believe we are, we're uniquely positioned to do this and, um, we, we really need your support to do this. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Katie Dean.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

KATIE DEAN: Thank you, Speaker Johnson, Chairs Dromm and Gibson, and council members for your time. My name is Katie Dean from District 34, and I would like to voice my opposition to the current budget and proposed 49% cut to the Department of Youth and Community Development. A city with diminished or extinguished youth, social, and community programs with increased police presence does not represent the ideals of New York City. Specifically, DYCD's initiatives target the exact programs I hope would we support right now, initiatives for homeless youth, family support, senior and housing programs, the Summer Youth Employment Program, and afterschool enrichment programs. The DYCD is the only department with a double-digit cut and it is by 49%. This will be devastating. These are not the programs I want to be diminished or extinguished. The organizations who currently receive funding from the DYCD did not stop when COVID-19 hit. When they couldn't physically meet with their students or communities they became community hubs or, rather, they were always community hubs and they continue to be that, coordination food

drives, organizing pet supplies, providing online classes, remote job opportunities for young people, and delivering supplies to home-bound individuals. When an unforeseen need popped up it was leaders on the ground who filled that void. One of many such organizations, Cora Dance in Red Hook, Brooklyn, has contributed in many such ways and depends on resources from the DYCD to continue their programs, which serve over 500 young artists yearly with pay like you can classes and performances, afterschool, internships bring in artists and social service programs. Stripping community hubs from their ability to do vital important work means depriving communities of so much. I would like to call for a 1% cut from the NYPD budget to reinstate the DYCD. A suppression plan with increased policing indicates inherent distrust of the citizens of New York City when we have historically shown to rise in moments of crisis. I believe...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

KATIE DEAN: ...in crisis that it's more important than ever to make a budget toward the future we want, not a budget created out of fear.

Thank you so much, council members, for your time and continued efforts.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Matteo Vidals.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MATTEO VIDALS: Ah, good evening. My name is Matteo Vidals and I'm a resident of Red Hook, Brooklyn, and I'd like to start off by saying thank you for the opportunity to speak and have my voice heard. The issue here pertains to the budget cut between agencies throughout the city. The RTA youth programs are being targeted, with the DYCD taking a 40% cut, while other programs receiving a less than 10% impact. It is evident that the RTA programs are being undervalued. This is plain and simple unfair. Growing up in Red Hook, Brooklyn, the RTA programs are considered a vital organ in this community. Without them, I'm scared to say that Red Hook would be in critical condition. Growing up and being exposed to sports, dance, and theater is something I will never take for granted. These programs have made me what I am today and offer more than just a ball to kick or a dance move to pick up, but real life lessons. Cora Dance, my little studio in Red Hook, Brooklyn, opened my younger eyes to a world I

didn't even know existed. It also kept me off the streets and instead I was in a warm, inviting, and safe environment. I will soon be a freshman at SUNY Purchase College [inaudible] towards dance, and I can tell you this. Without [inaudible] in the arts that I grew up with, I would not have made it this far. And I would not have my future planned out for myself the way I do now. Do you want to risk taking that away from another child? I have absorbed everything these programs have had to offer and I'm now on my way. But what about another young boy who won't be able to experience dance or theater the way I did? I don't want to see the next generation be robbed of their education and their futures because of an unconsidered action. The programs that are being planned to be cut [inaudible] to the up and coming generation due to creative, disciplined, and smart citizens, especially in communities that already don't have much to offer. In communities such as these there are one of two paths that youth can take. The arts and youth programs help them choose the correct path, and I can stand by this from personal experience. A future that does not include the arts and attending to youth will not be a bright one.

Perhaps then more [inaudible] will be needed. But as of now please let these programs be heard so that we do have something to look forward to.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MATTEO VIDALS: Especially during times such as these. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Giovanna Aragon Benola.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

GIOVANNA ARAGON BENOLA: Hello, my name is Giovanna Aragon and I'm representing the Healing Center, Daughters of the Lotus, a youth group of the Healing Center. The Healing Center is a gender-based violence community-based organization. I'm testifying today because I'm concerned that the proposed budget cuts to important services and youth programs. For me this is personal, coming from a family of domestic violence. This is a pandemic. The Healing Center has provided my family with much-needed stability and structure that COVID-19 stripped away overnight. My testimony now only represents my views, but the [inaudible] of the entire group.

Today I am advocating for SYEP and discretionary funding, such as [inaudible] initiative. SYEP is a lifeline for thousands of youth all over New York City. Youth depend on that money to help support their families and their needs. These needs do not just disappear. [inaudible] communities such as immigrant, black, brown, and LGBTQ youth will be forced to find other ways to provide for these needs. These ways are not always safe and there are many predators that [inaudible] advantage. Since the pandemic I and my friends are being bombarded by adults on social media with [inaudible] to start our own [inaudible] pages to make money. Onlyfriends.com is the site used to [inaudible] content. I personally have a teenage friend who was [inaudible] out of desperation instead of choice. The negative effects of this on a person's self-worth and mental and physical health can be long-lasting. At Daughters of the Lotus we discuss gender-based violence topics, including how predators [inaudible] target youth. We're looking to be informed. Unfortunately, many youth are not. [inaudible] community-based organizations at the Healing Center [inaudible] to be there to inform us, empower us, and

keep us safe. Not to take away from the great work...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

GIOVANNA ARAGON BENOLA: ...[inaudible] populations such as immigrant [inaudible] or LGBTQ youth feel intimated by the Family Justice Centers or do not want to engage with the police. It's CBOs like the Healing Center that provide culturally competent services and programs, tackle [inaudible] topics, and keep our communities informed. Youth programs and SYEP and community-based organizations must continue to be funded. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much for your testimony, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Bob Monahan.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

BOB MONAHAN: Good evening, everyone. Um, first and foremost, thank you to the City Council for these hearings, especially to the Queens delegation, who I've been watching all day, and, ah, Councilman Holden, my councilman. Hi, Bob. I'm Bob Monahan. I'm president of the Greater Ridgewood Youth Council, an organization that started 40 years ago, ah, with a $50,000 budget. We serve 3200

children and families a day, and, um, that could all end in the summertime. The Queens delegation knows from my testimony that I like to be brief. So here's my synopsis. In the '70s there was a commercial and it said you can pay now or you could pay me later, and the bottom line is if we don't put programs back for kids in the summertime and we leave all of them out, SYEP, daycare, Beacon, COMPASS, Sonic, 80% of the kids not in school, you better save your money because you'll be putting it in the juvenile justice, the criminal justice, and the law enforcement system. So we need to make a decision and I hope it's the right one. Thank you all very much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much for your testimony. Before we get to the next person, I want to acknowledge and have our colleague, Council Member Menchaca, for a few words.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Ah, hi, everyone. Thank you, Chairs, and, ah, I'm just compelled really quick to say hello and thank Matteo Vidals who spoke as a youth from Red Hook. Ah, he and Katie Dean spoke about Cora Dance and the work that they're doing to galvanize the voices of our youth and, ah, Cora Dance created a youth council and

who I've been meeting with and Matteo has been part of the, the group, and I just want to remind everybody that it was that group that brought me the equation, the math equation, that really talked about New York City as a whole and when you rip SYEP and the arts and you add more cops that does not equal public safety. So I want to say thank you to the youth council at Cora, ah, and as we keep moving forward I hope everyone just stays connected. We're gonna hear from every single one of you. Get up, stretch, get some water, rehydrate, stay here. I'm gonna be here to listen to every single one of you. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Aw, thank you so much, Council Member. Now we have Council Member Bob Holden.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Hi everyone.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Hi Bob.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: How ya doing? Ah, I want to just give a shout-out to Bob Monahan of the Greater Ridgewood Youth Council, and everyone that's been testifying here. Ah, Bob's done amazing things over the years. He helped thousands of youth, ah, in my community and beyond. Um, I don't know

where he gets the energy, but God bless him for his long-time commitment to the youth of our community. So, I say this every year when he testifies, I said, ah, whatever Bob wants he should get and it helps the youth of the community. So thanks, Bob, again, for all the work you've done and, ah, keep up the energy. I don't know how you do it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thanks, Council Member. OK, we'll go to the next, ah, participant. Next testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now call the next panel, which will be Sade Swift, Maru Batista, Anh-Thu Nguyen, Sadoof Sayal, Julie Quinton, Rebecca Talzak, Sienna Fontaine, Ovie Latimore, and Brendan Martin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

SADE SWIFT: Good afternoon. My name is Sade Swift, and I'm a worker-owner based in the Bronx at Cards by [inaudible] and a member of the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives, NYC NOC, Advocacy Council. In all of these spaces I have the opportunity to dream about and practice what a different world looks like and to pull my community in dreaming about what that looks, too. As a

cooperator two guiding principles that guide my work every day are cooperation among cooperatives and concern for community. Since COVID began I have found myself seeking ways to support my community and having heightened concern for the most vulnerable cooperators, who are undocumented, uninsured, Spanish speakers, chronically ill, etcetera. Concerning that that so many of the solutions by our federal government exclude entire communities of people, um, like giving loans that are not, um, able to be paid back, instead of grants, co-ops only have only place to turn and that is the organizations that built us and that ground us in our work. Organizations like NYC NOC, Take Root Justice, Green Workers Cooperatives, and countless others within the WCBDI initiative, which Amy mentioned before, who have helped me are truly guiding co-ops, especially those who are vulnerable with vulnerable [inaudible]. In just three days we lost 90% of our 2020 revenue. We should have, we shouldn't have to jump through hoops, um, and break barriers to get the resources we deserve. As a queer, black, immunocompromised, chronically ill cooperator who is currently financially supporting two households, for a total of

six people, I know that I deserve more from our city. My community deserves more. I hope that today on moving forward you continue to fund small businesses and all the other [inaudible] programs that guide my work and my cooperative's work, that you consider sharing your check with the most vulnerable [inaudible] in New York City, that when you make decisions you remember black, brown, indigenous, LGBTQIA+, chronically ill, immunocompromised, differently abled, undocumented, poor...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

SADE SWIFT: ...homeless, and all the other kind of vulnerable communities. The only way to create a new and better system is together with those most impacted to the front. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much for your testimony, thank you. We appreciate it.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Maru Batista.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MARU BATISTA: Good evening, Chairperson Dromm and the distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. My name is Maru Batista. I'm the director of the Cooperative Development Program at the Center for Family Life in

Sunset Park, Brooklyn. And we're a member of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative. This initiative, known for helping to start worker cooperatives, is also at the forefront of business model innovation, bringing worker ownership to scale in communities historically under-represented in small business ownership. At CFL we developed Stop and Go, a cooperatively owned web app where worker cooperatives from across the city jointly market their services and Brightly Cleaning, the country's first worker cooperative franchise. Cooperative businesses and their members are facing great financial impacts from the current COVID-19 crisis. Many of the domestic work cooperatives provide services that have been deemed nonessential under [inaudible] PAUSE order. At cleaning cooperatives we [inaudible] saw a 100% loss in income from the residential cleaning services since April. So that worker-owners can safely secure income, CFL is helping Brightly Cleaning cooperatives adapt by expanding to specialized commercial cleaning services as a new line of business, including [inaudible] training, navigating certification, and equipment requirements. Brightly Cleaning Cooperative

[inaudible] structure, including backup assistance, brand recognition, and a customer base, which positions them as a business model with enormous potential, even in the face of extreme hardships, like the current pandemic. This strong foundation could allow them to pivot their business model to include specialized cleaning services and effectively [inaudible] engaged customers and continue to remain competitive in the market. Funding for this initiative is enabling us to provide worker-owners in low-income communities with both these emergency response services and longer-term support through disasters, like the current pandemic. We thank you and urge you to continue to support, um, worker cooperative development in fiscal year 21. This commitment will sustain and expand transformational small business ownership opportunities for workers as an essential part of the recovery throughout the city. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Anh-Thu Nguyen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

ANH-THU NGUYEN: Good evening chairs, council members, and staff. My name is Anh-Thu Nguyen and I am director of strategic partnerships at Democracy at Work Institute. On behalf of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative, thank you for the opportunity to speak to our achievements and emphasize how worker-ownership can ensure small business recovery and resilience in this time. New York City Council's investment in worker-ownership is a national model for creating sustainable economic development, with cities including Boston, Philadelphia, and Madison following our lead. This year we surpassed the San Francisco Bay area as the largest worker cooperative ecosystem in the us. The South Bronx is home to the largest worker cooperative in the country, Cooperative Home Care Associates, with more than 2000 staff, the vast majority women and immigrants of color, all essential workers. The impact on our communities is real. While many traditional businesses struggle with paying their workers a minimum wage, worker cooperatives earn an average of $19.67 an hour. 70% of New York City worker-owners are immigrants. 76% of New York City worker-owners are women of color. Worker-owners are

bringing home living wages [inaudible] such as janitorial services and [inaudible]. Since fiscal year 15 your support has helped WCBDI create more than 631 new jobs and pathways to business ownership, reaching more than 8000 entrepreneurs with education and technical assistance and launch more than 130 new worker cooperative businesses across all five boroughs. Our work continues unabated through the COVID-19 crisis. This crisis, compounded with the [inaudible] tsunami of retiring baby boomer business owners, which impact at least 46,000 businesses and over half a million workers of color in New York City alone, creates an even greater sense of urgency to preserve small businesses through worker cooperative conversions, saving jobs that would otherwise be lost and keeping wealth in our community. It is critical for us to continue this work to keep small business doors open and sustain them for the next generation. Thank you for all that you do...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

AHN-THU NGUYEN: We look forward to continuing the work to build wealth for our communities through worker ownership.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sadoof Sayal.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

SADOOF SAYAL: Good evening, ah, Speaker Johnson, Chairs Dromm and Gibson, and council members and staff of the committee. My name is Sadoof Sayal and I'm with the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives, also known as NYC NOC. Ah, we are a trade association representing worker cooperatives across New York City. I'm also here on behalf of the 13 nonprofit organizations that comprise WCBDI, ah, or the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative. Over this past fiscal year we received 3.6 million dollars in funding to support worker cooperatives and businesses of individuals across the five boroughs, and we ask the City Council to further support for WCBDI through FY21 in order for us to double down on the essential long-term economic recovery work that will be needed to get our communities out of this crisis. As previously mentioned, WCBDI is an initiative that works to support businesses that are owned and controlled by women, immigrants, and people of color. Our members and their families, their communities, and their businesses have been directly impacted by COVID-19

and this work in this moment is essential. Over the past few months in this crisis the WCBDI organizations have been working tirelessly to support distressed businesses in navigating this crisis, reaching over 2000 individuals and almost 350 businesses during this time alone. Many of those we support have been excluded from federal relief and benefits and have struggled to gain access to grants or emergency loan programs and we have stepped in to fulfill that support and that need. As you know, worker co-ops are good businesses that operate for the benefit of the workers and the community at large. They are solutions. The issues of inequality, issues that have been further exposed and exacerbated during this crisis. During this our members, our worker co-ops, are doing everything they can to weather the storm, prevent layoffs, and center their products and services on the needs of the broader community. For example, our food co-ops are working to address food insecurities right now. As many of our worker co-ops continue to struggle...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

SADOOF SAYAL: ...they're bracing for the responsible reopening and will continue to need our

support. Um, finally, as mentioned, this initiative also works to save businesses and jobs by converting traditional worker, ah, businesses to worker-ownership. So we ask the City Council to further support for WCBDI and worker co-ops as part of the essential long-term recovery work that will be needed in the year to come. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thanks for your testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Julie Quinton.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

JULIE QUINTON: Thank you so much, good evening. Hi, I'm Julie Quinton. I'm the director of adult literacy at Make the Road New York. Ah, many Make the Road New York colleagues are here with me tonight and all of the services we're promoting are essential in the time of COVID-19. Thanks a ton for your consideration. Um, thank you firstly council members for your past support of adult literacy, which has been invaluable. When COVID-19 hit we quickly transitioned and now run English help job training and citizenship classes remotely via Zoom and other online platforms. Um, that said, even before COVID-19 funding levels for community-based

programs like ours didn't come close to meeting the demand. Over 2 million adult New Yorkers lack English language proficiency, a high school diploma, or both, and 75% of those in need of classes are immigrants. Public funding is only reaching 4% of those in need in any given year. So many of the adults who need our classes right now are currently on the front lines. They're performing essential work as home care, delivery, and maintenance workers, and are risking their lives to maintain their livelihoods and care for us. Others have lost their jobs and incomes and are confronting the unknown with no safety net. So in this moment adult literacy programs have the potential to reach thousands of adults who didn't study before through remote learning, and the need is great. Um, we ask the council to restore and baseline 12 million in adult literacy funding. This would help us preserve at least 7500 spots in classes that would otherwise be lost, and we'd also like to ask you to preserve funding for the Consortium for Worker Education, which supports a lot of immigrant Know Your Rights workshops and worker training with us. Learning that happens is going to prepare everyone to help restart

the economy and ensure greater security for their families. Um, please, again, preserve the 12 million in adult literacy funding and fund the CWE despite the challenges. Thank you so much to the entire Finance Committee, the speaker, and others. I appreciate your time. Take care of yourself.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, Julie. Thank you for your work.

JULIE QUINTON: Thanks. Be well.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rebecca Talzak.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

REBECCA TALZAK: Hi, good evening. My name is Rebecca Talzak and I'm the director of health programs at Make the Road New York. I thank the committee for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of Make the Road and our 24,000 members and staff during this current pandemic. Our largest base is in central Queens, the epicenter of the pandemic. Across all our sites our members and participants are dying. Many more of our staff and members are or have been sick and lost family. We've trained frontline staff on how to help community members locate bodies of deceased loved ones so those bodies can be located and tracked until it is possible to

have a burial. The need for our members to access health care is dire. We're continuing to do our benefit enrollment healthcare navigation work remotely, as well as our community health worker home visits, ah, via video calls, making sure that families with asthma and respiratory illnesses, um, are getting the care they need and providing counseling on COVID. We also help individuals access providers, figure out where to go to get tested or counseled with a provider if they have COVID-19 symptoms. Based on these experiences, we're making the following recommendations for the fiscal year 2021 budget. We urge the council to enhance and cap funding from $500,000 to $700,000, increase the [inaudible] existing CBOs in underserved communities. This enhancement will [inaudible] cap to serve an additional [inaudible] clients in the next year. We also request that the council maintain its allocation to the Access Health Initiative at 2.5 million, maintain its 1.5 million allocation to the Immigrant Health Initiative, and making funding for ending the epidemic at 7 million. Additionally, we respectfully ask the City Council to create a new initiative to support community health workers who are hired by

community-based organizations working in partnership with Health and Hospitals facilities. Finally, the city should increase funding to 22 million for the emergency food assistance program to support this critical source of food for more than 500 pantries and soup kitchens in the city. These programs enable Make the Road and other community-based organizations to reach out to immigrant families with information about the rights and available health resources and address healthcare disparities. Thank you again to the Finance Committee, Speaker Johnson, and entire City Council for your ongoing support and consideration. Make the Road appreciates our partnership with each of you to ensure...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

REBECCA TALZAK: ...[inaudible] immigrant families in New York City. I hope you will give additional consideration to the requests we have made, and we look forward to working together in this next fiscal year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, Rebecca. Thank you for your work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sienna Fontaine.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

SIENNA FONTAINE: Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes.

SIENNA FONTAINE: Good evening. I'm Sienna Fontaine. I'm the legal director at Make the Road New York. Ah, along with my colleagues, we thank the council for the opportunity to testify tonight on behalf of our staff, members, and clients. As you know, the communities we serve have experienced COVID's devastation more acutely than almost anywhere in the country. While Make the Road is working on many fronts to provide support in this unprecedented time as you've heard and will hear, I'm here to underscore to the committee the critical importance of keeping our desperately needed legal services programs funded at their current levels. We have three key areas of legal services and programs we want to highlight. First, immigration legal services. Make the Road is requesting continued funding, including 1 million for the Raise Response Legal Collaborative and continued funding at its levels for the ActionNYC program. The Raise Response Legal Collaborative provides community support and legal representation for immigrant New Yorkers impacted by ICE raids. ICE continues to terrorize

our communities during this pandemic, resulting in a high demand for our services that we simply can't meet with current funding. Additionally, the ActionNYC program continues to be a key way for vulnerable immigrant community members across the city to access expert immigration legal services, especially in this time of such uncertainty. The city must invest in organizations that have built expertise and capacity over the years, delivering this culturally and linguistically competent services. Second, Make the Road urges the city to continue to support critical legal services for low-wage immigrant workers through the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative and the Low-Wage Worker Support Initiative. Low-wage immigrant workers have been amongst the hardest hit during this public health crisis. Many have lost their jobs, are working on the front lines without protection, and are not eligible for many forms of federal and state relief. Referrals to our legal team have doubled during this pandemic. Ah, these problems allow Make the Road, along with other providers in our collaborative, to help clients access millions of dollars annually and unlawfully [inaudible] wages,

access to benefits, and other financial relief as a result of successful advocacy and litigation.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

SIENNA FONTAINE: Lastly, Make the Road asks that the city continue to fund essential housing legal services through programs like the anti-harassment tenant protection program, um, in this moment, ah, the strategies that we use to prevent displacement are going to be even more necessary as landlords employ ramped-up tactics to remove tenants who haven't been able to pay rent, and we know that this kind of pressure has and will continue to increase on vulnerable tenants across the city. Um, thank you for your time and your continued support of legal services programs that stabilize vulnerable communities in this moment of crisis.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Sienna. Thanks so much for your work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ovie Latimore.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

OVIE LATIMORE: Sorry. My name is Ovie Latimore. Ah, good evening. Ah, I work at Make the Road New York and I'm presenting testimony on behalf of [inaudible] who couldn't be here tonight due to

helping hold vigil for fallen community members. Um, I would like to highlight our Trans Immigrant Project, or TRIP, and transgender, nonconforming, intersex, and queer, TNIQ, programming, which continues to provide crucial outreach to a supportive community and services to TNICQ immigrants and people of color. TRIP provides much-needed health and immigrant survival services to some of the city's most vulnerable community members, as many have tested positive for COVID-19, have limited access to medical care, and are immunocompromised. Our team has been essential in sharing that timely and accurate information reaches these populations so they can receive the care and assistance needed for survival. We also continue to provide high-quality legal services for TGNCIQ immigrants. Ah, our legal team has [inaudible] activities identifying [inaudible] forms of immigration relief and there is a lack of free legal services providers that are affirming and understand the complexity of immigration case for folks in the community. Ah, these legal needs have not disappeared during this crisis and if anything have been amplified. The disparity between competent service providers and the

urgent needs of these communities has become all the more drastic as our members are located at the epicenter of the pandemic in Queens, as well as other hotspots across the city. Due to this, we ask the City Council to continue to allocate funds towards services for transgender and gender nonconforming New Yorkers, including 1.2 million to health services and maintaining funding through this [inaudible] for persons involved in the sex trade initiative. In addition, we are asking the city to provide $800,000 for immigration legal services for the TGNC community members, for the new transgender, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, TGNCNB Immigration Legal Services Initiative and Coalition. [inaudible] essential in strengthening this small network of legal services providers that have experienced servicing TGNCNB immigrants...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

OVIE LATIMORE: ... at a time when these communities need quality service more than ever. This new initiative will empower us and others to fund new attorneys and other staffing lines to meet increased demand for services, which will free up additional resources that can be used for wrap-around

services. Ah, we'd like to thank the Finance Committee again and the chairs for the committee for this time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Ovie. Thank you to your and your team. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Brendan Martin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: All right, hey Brendan.

BRENDAN MARTIN: Hello, and thank you all. Um, my name is Brendan Martin. I'm the executive director of the Working World. We finance and support worker-owned businesses in New York City and are a proud member of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative. Um, first I want to point out that supporting small businesses is not spending so much as investing in tomorrow's revenues. It is entirely essential. Ah, as a case in point we brought in over 2 million dollars in federal COVID support, money that contributes directly to New York City, and we're just one organization in our initiative that has dozens of organizations. Um, and all of those organizations and supported businesses did not go over, did not go under but instead survive

and even thrive. Those businesses will now go on to create tens of millions of dollars in revenues that they will spend in New York City. Now there are other ways to support small businesses. But worker ownership is the one that centers equity, something desperately needed to alleviate the impact COVID has disproportionately had on communities of color. Lastly, worker ownership offers a solution for business owners overwhelmed by the crisis. Even before COVID there was a record number of business owners looking to retire in New York City, and that appears to be skyrocketing. There's no federal grant that can make a retired owner put in the energy to restart a business. Worker ownership is a proven strategy for owners to transition out without closing their businesses. We are preparing an enormous initiative to save these businesses by converting them to worker ownership, creating equity and a huge windfall for the otherwise shuddering New York City economy. Worker ownership and WCBDI is the investment for economic growth that centers equity and for the future economy of our great city.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, Brendan, and this is the last panel related to the

Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative, and certainly I want to recognize all of you and thank you for your work. Thank you for recognizing that in the midst of COVID we must continue to invest in worker ownership to build economic power, economic wealth in communities of color and immigrant communities. Ah, I also want to recognize all of my colleagues that have been so supportive through the years of this initiative, but the champion in the City Council, I take my hat off to Council Member Helen Rosenthal, who has led the conversations on worker cooperatives, held number events at City Hall and 250 Broadway, and really made sure that worker cooperatives have a voice, and representing the Bronx, ah, where we have a high number of worker cooperatives. I'm grateful for your work and thank you all for testifying tonight and really providing a lot of insight on the work you're still doing and really the impact that this budget will have on your members. So we support you and we thank you to all the worker cooperative memberships who are providing testimony tonight. Thank you guys so much. We'll move on to the next panel.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our next panel will be Holly Smeltzer, Sarah Chiles, Joel Bakagrini, Robin Vitale, and Greg Mahalavich.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

HOLLY SMELTZER: Good evening and thank you very much for your time. Many of us as youth experience the excitement and anxiety of waiting for a special moment to happen. Perhaps it was graduating high school or college, preparing for a job interview, or getting your own apartment. Many of us have only been able to achieve those rites of passage counting on support of a consistent, dependent adult. However, for some young people, particularly those in foster care, the support of a consistent, dependable adult is not a given and many young people age out of foster care without permanent long-term supports. My name is Holly Smeltzer. I am a New York City foster parent. I am also the FairFutures program director at the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services. Our organization is proud to be a member of FairFutures, a coalition of over 100 nonprofit organizations supporting young people in and aging out of foster care. FairFutures coaches and tutors have been at the forefront of helping

youth in care secure safe housing, food, and medical supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the midst of this crisis, FairFutures coaches and tutors continue to provide emotional and academic support and for many young people are the only support system they have. Please, reflect on special moments you've experienced in your life and think of those you've had in your corner cheering you on and providing invaluable support to ensure your success. Now please consider all the youth in New York City who may not have support networks. I can't imagine asking my children both in my home and those I am fortunate enough to work alongside in the FairFutures community to go through those life moments along. Let us make sure young people in care have the support of a consistent, dependable adult. Your action in supporting FairFutures funding will exemplify New York City' commitment to the success of our young people in care. May is national foster care month. There is no better time than now for the city to fulfill its promise to foster youth...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

HOLLY SMELTZER: ...and show our young people we've got their backs. Thank you so much to

the committee for the opportunity to speak and for all of your support, and have a great evening.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for your testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sarah Chiles.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

SARAH CHILES: Good evening. Ah, thank you to Chairs, ah, Dromm and Gibson, and thanks to [inaudible] for hosting this very important public hearing. My name is Sarah Chiles. I am the executive director of the Redlich Horowitz Foundation, and we were part of the public-private partnership providing financial support to FairFutures. I want to state our gratitude for your enthusiastic embrace of FairFutures in the, the FY20 budget. Your leadership has ensured that hundreds of young people in foster care are now receiving the support and guidance of a caring, connected coach and tutor. This support is more critical now than ever, as these youth struggle with the instability brought on by the pandemic. FairFutures coaches have become their lifelines during this crisis, providing them with critical support to continue their educations, access food and mental health support, maintain

stable housing, talk through emotions, and problem solve school and work challenges. I also want to express how proud we are to be part of this unprecedented collaboration across the city's child welfare system. With all 26 foster care agencies and over 300 staff involved, including hundreds of newly hired coaches this year, more than 100 organizations in our coalition, and seven foundation partners, FairFutures has united support from all sectors of the system. Most notable are the hundreds of youth leaders who are engaged in advocacy to maintain this critical program. This public-private partnership has leveraged over 2 million dollars in private dollars, which have funded a director to provide TA to all agencies and to train staff. We've developed comprehensive hiring and training manuals and an online platform to track youth and systems progress, and a directory of over 400 vetted work force training programs. And we've even hired...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

SARAH CHILES: ...a youth leader to coordinate engagement. We join 1100 young people in and aged-out of foster care in asking the city to fulfill its promise to foster youth, and we look

forward to working with the City Council, to work collaboratively with the mayor to restore funding for FairFutures in this year's budget. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thank you for your work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Joel Bakagrini.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

JOEL BAKAGRINI: Sorry, my, um, good evening Chairs Dromm and Gibson. My name is Joel Bakagrini and I'm the president and CEO of, ah, the New York Family. Um, I'm here tonight to speak about, um, FairFutures. Not much that I can add to what Holly and Sarah said. Um, but I do want to talk to you for, ah, a minute about it. FairFutures is a program that, that, um, provides evidence-based academic tutoring and life coaching, ah, to young people in foster care. Tonight I'm here to speak on behalf of the 1100 young people who co-signed a letter to both the mayor, Mayor de Blasio, and, ah, Speaker Johnson, the 200 young people participated in a town hall meeting with, um, Commissioner Hanson yesterday, the 25 coaches and young people who, um, submitted testimony for this hearing. But most

1 importantly I'm here to speak on behalf of the
2 thousands of young people who have already benefitted
3 from a program that you so unconditionally and
4 enthusiastically, um, supported last year. You know,
5 ah, I took note over the last few hours of the number
6 of speakers who, who addressed the trauma that so
7 many of our young people have been exposed to most
8 recently as a result of the virus. I can't imagine,
9 when you look back, that there's a group of young
10 people in this city who have been exposed to more
11 trauma, trauma over their young life than those
12 placed in foster care, and while we can't change
13 their past we certainly can make sure that their,
14 that they have a fair future. And just, Chair Gibson
15 was in a meeting with, with a few of us the other day
16 and we talked about how what a fair future means and
17 what it doesn't mean, and what it doesn't mean. It
18 doesn't mean that we can tolerate any longer a high
19 school graduation rate of young people aging out of
20 foster care at 22%, or that only 3%...
21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.
22 JOEL BAKAGRINI: ...of them will ever
23 graduate, um, um, from college. And so tonight I
24 want to suggest to you that, that FairFutures is
25

justified on a couple of different levels. Nobody asks to go into foster care. They're placed in foster care. We think that obligates the city to make sure that these young people get an education and the supports they need to make the decisions as young adults that is gonna in many ways predict that their life as adults, um, will be. So, ah, chairs and council members I very much appreciate and we very much appreciate your unconditional support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, and certainly to you and your colleagues in the FairFutures campaign family, thank you for all of your work for investing in coaches and mentors for so many foster youth. I also want to give credit to my colleagues, and certainly Council Member Steve Levin, who has really led the charge on the investment of 10 million dollars in the ACS budget last year. We support you. We stand with you, and we know during COVID-19 coaches and mentors are needed like now more than ever before. So I thank you so much and we will continue working together. Thank you, FairFutures. Thank you, guys.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Robin Vitale.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

ROBIN VITALE: Good evening chairs and, ah, Speaker Johnson, and all the council members that are hanging in here with us. Kudos to you for, ah, for sticking out through this long, long hearing. Um, my name is Robin Vitale. I serve as the vice president of health for the American Heart Association here in the New York City market. Um, you've heard from us annually, um, when it comes to budget negotiation about suggestions for the city to invest in health-related programs, um, offered by the city that align with our mission. Um, obviously the COVID crisis is creating a significant burden on those programs and, ah, as a result the Heart Association has realigned our focus and really thinking critically about how we're asking the city to invest in initiatives that will help in this moment in time, as well as set up an infrastructure of programs, ah, for the long term, to really serve those New Yorkers that have been burdened by this virus, um, in the most alarming disparate ways. Um, we have four priorities when we talking to you tonight. Um, I'm gonna take my time now to address two of those. Um, the first is around food

2 insecurity. Um, you've heard from the Heart
3 Association for years that we would like to see a
4 broader investment in the SNAP incentive program
5 known as Health Bucks. Um, while we still want to
6 make sure we're encouraging New Yorkers to eat
7 healthy, even during this time of crisis, ah, we
8 realize that the demand on SNAP and SNAP enrollments
9 has just been exacerbated in this moment. We want to
10 make sure that the city is investing significant
11 funds, um, whether it's to HRA or other, ah, city
12 agencies that are supporting, ah, that SNAP
13 expansion. It's pivotal in this time that we make
14 sure every New Yorker is able to access food and, ah,
15 preferably, again, healthy food through that system.
16 Um, additionally I want to talk quickly about tobacco
17 control. Um, we realize also in this social
18 emotional crisis, um, tobacco issues are a
19 significant concern. We've heard, um, from young
20 people, um, especially with the flavored electronic
21 cigarette ban going into effect, um, that they're
22 looking for cessation, ah, services and those
23 services should be virtual, they should be
24 accessible, and...
25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

ROBIN VITALE: ... they should be broadened. We ask for your help in helping to make sure that all New Yorkers can have access to those services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for your work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Greg Mihailovich.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

GREG MIHAILOVICH: OK, thank you, Chairs Dromm and Gibson. My name is Greg Mihailovich. I'm the community advocacy director for the American Heart Association here in New York City. Ah, so speaking about the, the other two elements my colleague mentioned, ah, one about, ah, access to care. So with COVID-19 impacting our hospitals we've actually seen a sharp increase in the people using telemedicine to, to get their care. And that's good given the current circumstance, but there's only so much quality care you can get over the telephone or through an app, which is why self-monitoring is, ah, self-monitoring devices are so important. About two years ago New York City invested in blood pressure kiosks and placed them in, ah, neighborhoods that high incidents of unmanaged blood pressure, and that

was also a great thing. But that kind of model doesn't work now. It's neither safe nor practicable in the current environment. So smaller, ah, self-monitoring devices like blood pressure cuffs and pulse oximeters that, ah, can be lent out by, ah, community health partners and allow people to do this kind of, ah, self-monitoring at home, ah, really lets these medically underserved populations, ah, to get that care that they need. Ah, you know, for personally my mom, who's 72 and has a heart condition, she went into a. fib on March 22 and the cardiologist was like don't come in, and the fact that she had the blood pressure cuff and was able to monitor her health really helped her get through that. And we have a partnership with the Queens Public Library and, ah, the Far Rockaway branch actually has some blood pressure cuffs that they loan out, and it really is well received, affordable, and manageable program. So we're asking that the, that we find a way to include funding to have these self-monitoring devices for community health partners. Ah, secondly, the American Heart Association recommends that, ah, we get 30 minutes of moderate activity five days a week, and that's why we applaud

the council's support of the Open Streets Initiative, the Open Streets Plan to create that temporary space. But the weather's getting warmer, ah, we're gonna see more people out there biking. The *New York Times*, ah, reported there's a bicycle shortage in New York City and DOT's fully expecting more cyclists on the road. The Green Wave program to continue our bike network in closing those gaps in our greenways should be seen as an essential project for the health and safety...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

GREG MIHAILOVICH: ...of New Yorkers so they can get that activity and get around safely. Thank you so much for everything you have done and will do to protect the lives of New York. The American Heart Association remains your partner in making sure that people live longer and healthier lives.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, Greg. Thank you to you and your team for your work. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, who will be Edie Flaherty, Nancy Romer,

Karen Imus, Sonal Jessel, Amy Cohen, and Danny Harris.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

EDIE FLAHERTY: Hi, thanks for the opportunity to testify and thanks to council members for hanging in there. My name is Edie Flaherty. I'm an organizer at Align. We co-coordinate the Climate Works for All Coalition and Coalition of Environmental Justice Groups, leader and community organizations, all working towards reducing emissions to fight climate change through [inaudible] transition. We're in the middle of tough times right now and I want to commend the leadership of the City Council in the fight against COVID-19 to protect all New Yorkers. And though we are focused now on the public health and safety as a result of the COVID crisis, we must not forget that we are also in the middle of an economic [inaudible] crisis. 900,000 New Yorkers, or one in five New Yorkers, can be expected to be out of work by the end of June. And the climate crisis, which has already destroyed New York communities and continues to impact New Yorkers daily will worsen rapidly if we fail to take more aggressive action. We have 10 years left before our

city and the world is irreversibly on a path towards climate disaster. At the intersection of these crisis are New York's low-income black and brown communities, who are experiencing higher rates of death from COVID-19, higher rates of job loss, and a disproportionate impact of the climate crisis and environmental injustice. We must take action now to address both these crises at once if we want a future for our city. We must invest in infrastructure projects that put New Yorkers back to work in good union jobs and move us towards our mission direction goals while prioritizing environmental justice communities and communities of color. The Climate Works For All Coalition has developed the New York City Climate and Community Stimulus Platform, which includes infrastructure projects that address our climate needs from training our work force for climate jobs to expanding public transportation, retrofitting homes and buildings, public land resiliency projects, and more. If these projects are implemented it can be, could mean the creation of more than 100,000 jobs for New Yorkers. And in the short term we must move forward with implementation of Local Law 97, which could create more than 40,000

energy efficacy jobs with relatively low investment from the city. We must move forward with the city's solar installation goals and continue our composting program, which creates [inaudible] jobs annually. We must not cut programs and projects that worsen our economic recession by cutting off opportunities for jobs creations...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

EDIE FLAHERTY: ...[inaudible] climate goals. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for your work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Nancy Romer.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

NANCY ROMER: OK, thank you for those of you, thank you for those of you who organized this. I've been listening since about 11:00 a.m. and, ah, to the brilliant and dedicated New York City advocates testifying today. It's moving and humbling. We are collectively describing a world we need and it's very different than the one we have. Scientists warned us about minimizing COVID-19 back in January and had we heeded their warnings we could have saved tens of thousands of lives and hundreds of

thousands of jobs. The scientists are warning us about much more devastating consequences to runaway climate change. If we don't act now the lives we love, the people we love, and the planet we love will be devastated. The scientists tell us that we have 10 short years to respond, um, and, ah, shift away from a fossil fuel-based economy to one based on renewable energy. This can be done while we're recovering from the health and economic devastation of the pandemic and prevent the greatest threat, climate change, from advancing. Our city must take the lead if we can ever expect the rest of the nation and the world to follow. We're asking the City of New York to advance a green recovery. It will require investments right now in green infrastructure, real and thorough retrofitting of all buildings in New York City to maximize energy efficiency, and dramatically expand solar, wind, and composting capacity. This is not the time to pit one important crisis against another. It's the time to create a future that takes the health of individuals, communities, and our planet as central to solutions. The People's Climate Movement New York, the organization that I'm representing, asks that the

City of New York support the following as part of the New York City Climate and Community Stimulus Platform. First, implement Law 97, which would expand retrofitting of buildings...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

NANCY ROMER: ...and making them energy efficient. This will create 40,000 or more jobs. We, to continue and expand solar installations on all city buildings. Continue the planning and development of offshore wind installations. Continuing expand the composting program. Closing it will be costly and startup will be even more costly. Composting costs can be covered by expanding the program. The whole idea of composting is that it sequesters carbon and decreases pollution. If you put food scraps into the landfill it creates methane, which is 82 times as potent as carbon and settles in people's lungs. We need to demand from the state the ability to the tax the rich. That's the way to get out of this crisis. We must...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you.

NANCY ROMER: ...[inaudible] tax the rich and create a campaign in the city to force the state to do that. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so very much. Thank you. Thank you for your work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Karen Imus.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: The clock starts now.

KAREN IMUS: Hi, I'm Karen Imus with the Waterfront Alliance. Thank you, council members, for holding this hearing today. The Waterfront Alliance is a coalition of more than 1100 organizations working together to inspire and effect resilient, revitalized, and accessible coastlines for all communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the importance of civic preparedness and regional resilience to prevent catastrophe and collective strategies to weather both literal and figurative storms are needed today more than ever. This includes a continued focus on comprehensive, just, and meaningful resilience reforms and investments in green and gray infrastructure to protect vulnerable communities, citywide ferry service that serves commuters across five boroughs, and a commitment to the growth of offshore wind in the region, as well as a commitment to climate education. We commend and appreciate the council for its commitment to environmentally friendly focused programs through a

greener New York City initiative. Waterfront Alliance, along with other organizations funded by this initiative supports Sustainability Project, green jobs training, environmental education, among other community-centered initiatives. These programs help ensure that New York is a more equitable, sustainable, and environmentally friendly city. Since 2016 Waterfront Alliance has provided a Waterfront Alliance field lab program called Estuary Explorers for children in grades three through eight across public schools. And thanks to a greener New York City we're able to work with underserved communities across five boroughs and to connect youth to the critical environmental concerns facing our coastal city. Many of these young people have never visited the waterfront in their own back yards. And furthermore, students continue to stay home during the pandemic, Waterfront Alliance is proud to offer remote learning options for students to better understand the ecological, climate, and urban issues facing our coastal city. We encourage the council to continue the current overall funding level of a greener New York City. This is the only environmental initiative in the council and merits

greater attention as the region's climate risks increase. Thank you again for your commitment to environmental issues and to a greener New York City, and for having me here today. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very much, Karen. Thank you for your work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sonal Jessal.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SONAL JESSEL: Ah, good afternoon council members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening. Ah, my name is Sonal Jessel. I'm the policy advocate coordinator at We Act for Environmental Justice. Ah, over the past 31 years We Act has been combating environmental racism in northern Manhattan. Ah, I'm here to advocate concern about the communities we serve in northern Manhattan, which is [inaudible] black, Latino, low-income, and hard hit by COVID-19. I'm also here as a member of the Climate Works For All Coalition and I'm testifying today to demand [inaudible] funding for programs that are [inaudible], our climate crisis, and supporting communities hardest hit by the pandemic. We join the coalition to stand for New York City community members, labor groups,

environmental justice communities to demand we fund [inaudible] both climate action but also stimulate our city post crisis. As outlined in our New York City Climate and Community Stimulus Program, which was released last month, we must invest in green infrastructure projects to put our communities back to work in good union jobs that move us towards our climate goals. Released this month, a report by the BEW Resource Partnership found that around half a million clean energy jobs had been lost nationwide and we're heading to close to a million by the end of June. Latino workers represent about one-quarter of those jobs lost, even though they're only about 14% of the industry. Additionally, a study by the Solar Foundation last year reported that black workers represent only about 8% of the solar work force. I can't even find data on their job loss. Clearly, people of color are hit hard by unemployed due to this pandemic, but on top of that they have historically been under-represented in the clean energy industry, particularly in the renewable energy. Ah, solutions that address disparate unemployment due to COVID can also be paired with our immediate need to address our climate crisis. First,

we demand Local Law 97 be funded and enforced. We can create 40,000 jobs with those oversight positions. Second, we must continue with solar installation sooner rather than later. We can't choose a healthy New York City and a healthy economy until we put people back to work in a route that is equitable. Amongst many other lessons, the COVID-19 pandemic is showing us how we are not prepared for the consequences of climate change, some of which we have already experienced.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

SONAL JESSEL: As a public health worker with focus upon climate and health, I know that we will be seeing a rise in infectious diseases in New York City, all around the world, due to the climate crisis. If we don't want another pandemic we can prevent the worst from happening if we make drastic efforts to mitigate climate change. Through this initiative we can provide people with good jobs, for those that have lost their job, and intentionally close the [inaudible] racial disparity and renewable industry employment. So, ah, thank you all very much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Sonal. Thank you to you and your staff for your work. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Amy Cohen.

AMY COHEN: Good evening. You can hear me?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes, we can hear you, Amy.

AMY COHEN: Good evening. My name is Miranda Nuevas. Like my [inaudible] I'm a fighter. I'm here today speaking for the [inaudible] really appreciate you for having me here tonight. Because my [inaudible] have loved me to fight back and make sure our streets are safe from reckless drivers. Matthew was my, my oldest sone. He was 25 years young, a cyclist, a wrestler a dancer, when he was killed and hit and run over by a dump truck driver making an illegal U-turn on the Willis Avenue Bridge on November 9, 2019. Matthew was a rising wrestling star from the South Bronx, who was very driven as a kid from, from a young age. If he wanted something he worked for it. Hard work and dedication was his words. Those work ethics clearly fueled him in wrestling. As he said in an interview before he was

killed, "Wrestling is my life line. I finally got a shot." That was taken away from him. Mattie never had a chance to finally shine. He was at his peak. He was more than just a rising star. He was my life, my angel, my hero. He supported our family and now we are broken and suffering. It's been six [inaudible] months already. As we face this new pandemic we cannot ignore other epidemics in our midst. Please, for Mattie and Jenna Bonilla [inaudible] also a hit and run victim, please continue to make and fund the dangerous [inaudible] act, the street master plan, the green wave, and all of the street safety initiatives. Too much lives is at stake if you don't. Thank you very much for having me. I appreciate your time and have a good evening.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, and we appreciate you sharing your story. Thank you so much. Thank you for your advocacy, not only on behalf of your family, but certainly many other families who are sharing in that pain as well. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Danny Harris.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

DANNY HARRIS: Good evening, everybody. Thank you for the opportunity to be here to [inaudible] council and all the other advocates. Ah, I stand here as the executive director of Transportation Alternatives, representing, ah, 150,000 supporters. We stand to actually offer you something, which is that you, City Council, help to oversee one of the greatest assets that our city has to support our recovery, which is our streets. Right now 80% of our streets is dedicated solely to the movement and storage of vehicles. Just yesterday, Transportation Alternatives and over 100 community partners put out a call to expand our robust Open Streets program. In giving our streets back to people we can help to solve at least five major issues that will support our recovery - public health, equity, transportation, business, and the environment. This council has done incredible things recently, especially with the Streets Master Plan and commercial waste zone reform, and a number of other milestone things that are first in this nation to help us think creatively about our streets and transportation. Right now New York has this chance to choose its own future and we encourage all of you

to continue invest in not only life-saving programs around our streets, but to reimagine our streets as a pathway for small businesses, to help solve equity issues across the boroughs, to help solve pollution issues, whether it's in the asthma triangle in the Bronx or other communities, but also as a pathway to keeping New York moving. We cannot handle an influx of more cars as people move away from public transit. We need to be building dedicated bike and bus ways now and giving more space back to pedestrians, especially in the age of social distancing. So, again, we are so appreciative to this council for all of your forward-leaning work and encouraging not only to maintain investment, but to increase investment in our streets as a pathway for our city's recovery, and that pathway needs to be on streets built for people, not for cars. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, and thank you for your advocacy, your leadership on behalf of Transportation Alternatives. We appreciate you and we will continue to work with you and your team. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call our next panel, who will be Rashida Harris, Danora

Gettichu, Christopher Triber, Akela Tomlinson, Anthony Tassi, Henry Saylor, and Natasha Cherry Perez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

RASHIDA HARRIS: [inaudible]

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Rashida?

RASHIDA HARRIS: [inaudible]

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Is she there? Hello? Rashida?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We can move on to Danora and we'll come back to her.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK, OK, we'll come back to Rashida.

UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible]

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now, Danora.

DANORA GETTICHU: Thank you. Good evening, council members. Thank you so much for your [inaudible] testimony on behalf of Generation Citizen regarding the fiscal year 2021 expense budget. I'm Danora Gettichu. I'm the executive director. Generation Citizen appreciates the council's 2 million dollar investment in youth civic education through the Civic Education in City Schools

Initiative over the last four fiscal years. This funding has enabled Generation Citizen to educate and empower over 14,000 middle and high school students in secondary schools citywide, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to participate in our local and state democracy. I want to applaud the council for its leadership during this difficult and uncertain time, especially given the hard budget choices the body is contemplating for the upcoming fiscal year. We respectfully request that the council renew its funding in Generation Citizen, to affirm its commitment to youth civics education. As the city faces major disruptions in education during this pandemic, um, and it is a key pivotal year for city, state, and federal elections, now is not the time for the council to walk away from its long-standing and deep commitment to civics education and youth civic engagement. Quite the contrary, in this moment the resonating them must be that democracy doesn't pause, it adapts. The council's renewal of funding would be a bold contract to Mayor de Blasio's, ah, defunding of the Civics for All Initiative and proposed cuts to teacher professional development. As you've seen throughout this hearing,

youth are the present and the future of our democracy, and if we can actually give them the tools they need to participate they will make their voices heard, as so many young people have done today, like our young person Ishrap Jahon who could not testify today, but had op ed published in *Gothamist* yesterday about making sure the council restores funding to SYEP. I also want to elevate the work of students at Brooklyn Middle School Collective in Council Member Levin's district. Those students, even in a disrupted educational environment, continue to advocate remotely and work on their project around Fair Fares, something that I know Speaker Johnson spoke about at the start of this hearing. Um, was have to make sure that in this pandemic we are continuing to give young people what they need to be able to advocate for themselves and their community.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

DANORA GETTUCHI: Um, I just want to applaud you for all you're doing and thank you again for making sure that you're prioritizing youth civics education and making sure that in a disrupted moment we can do, use tools like project-based learning to educate young people. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, and thank you, Generation Citizen. We appreciate your partnership. Looking forward to working with you. Thank you. Keep up the good work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rashida Harris.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

RASHIDA HARRIS: Hey.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Rashida, are you there?

RASHIDA HARRIS: Hey, hi, thank you City Council members, thank y'all everyone for, um, I was on this call since this morning. I've been talking all over the place. My name is Rashida Harris. I live in the Bronx, District 4, City Council Mark, ah, Gjonaj, District 13. My daughter [inaudible] school in East Harlem, um, School District 11, Diana Ayala. Ah, Lord Jesus, where do I begin? I just, to hear the youth and their testimonies, to not want to go back and try to fight to figure out we could fully fund these schools and not take away these kids' money is just, is, is criminal. And I know y'all are trying to do a job, can do, earlier a City Council member said, um, on this quarter we probably will not tax the ultra-rich to raise revenue on a state level

2 to help fill the gaps. But we can. If every single
3 City Council member and Assembly member and state
4 senators raise this issue and know in our heart that
5 this is real, a real option, we could push for it and
6 it can happen. And I don't understand why we're so
7 quick to dismiss the fact that we have 112
8 billionaires who reside in New York State who can pay
9 a tiny bit more to help avoid this drastic budget
10 cuts to education, knowing our children need it.
11 This is money. Y'all heard those youth voices
12 beginning to fund their school to help preserve the
13 school budget and give them the services they
14 desperately need to survive. We can cut from some of
15 the 400 million, um, dollar budget from police
16 surveillance. We can cut from some of the over 30
17 million dollars we spend on corporate contracts for
18 testing and assessments. I'm just gonna leave y'all
19 with these questions. How much does the DOE pay for
20 iPads, per iPad, for the remote learning and why
21 would buy laptops and provide hot spots for remote
22 learning to help save 100 million dollars, which
23 would have helped us not cut 100 million dollars from
24 the Fair Student Funding that PEP voted on to cut two
25 weeks ago. And that's...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

RASHIDA HARRIS: ...how PEP, last night PEP approved a 1.8 million dollar budget for Approved Tech, Tech Solution to help manage remote learning and just approved 40.5 million dollars to IBM to [inaudible] these iPads for remote learning. What are we doing? Help our schools, please. Fund them, please. We need it. And we know we need it on a federal level and we're gonna continue to fight. But we need y'all to fight with us also. Please. Thank y'all for the time. Thank y'all for listening.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for your advocacy on behalf the Bronx. Thank you. [laughs]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Christopher Triber.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

CHRISTOPHER TRIBER: Yes, hi, good, good evening. My name is Christopher Triber. I'm the associate executive director for Children's Services with the Interagency Council. We are a nonprofit membership association of more than 150 agencies that provide services to children and adults with developmental disabilities. Our membership includes more than 50 preschool special education providers,

the majority of whom are in New York City. Our preschool serves thousands of preschool kids across the five boroughs every day. We are thankful that last year the City Council recognized the importance of early childhood education and implemented the salary parity agreement for early childhood teachers in New York City. This was a major accomplishment. But our teachers were left out of that salary parity agreement. This is having a drastic effect and impact on our preschool special education programs and the ability to hire and retain certified teachers. We are calling on the City Council to work to address this exclusion and to ensure that teachers in the 4410 preschool special education programs receive the same pay raises as all other early childhood teachers in New York City. The teaching staff in our preschools are the hidden heroes of this COVID-19 crisis. They are deeply caring and committed professionals who are working hard every single day to ensure that children in our schools receive a free and appropriate public education. Given the impact of COVID-19 on communities across New York City, we know that there are going to be many children who are going to need preschool special

education services. What we don't know is if services will be available to them when they need them. The ultimate question for elected officials today is how will you answer the mother of a 3-year-old child who was recently diagnosed with autism and cannot find a preschool seat when she desperately needs one for her son. IEC recognizes the serious challenges that New York City is facing given the COVID-19 crisis and we understand the difficult choices that you will need to make. But we ask do not forget our preschool special education children with developmental disabilities and the teachers who provide these critical services. Thank you. Appreciate the time tonight.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for all your work. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Akela Tomlinson.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

AKELA TOMLINSON: Can you hear me? Hello? Can you hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we hear you.

AKELA TOMLINSON: Oh, OK, great, sorry.

UNIDENTIFIED: We hear you.

AKELA TOMLINSON: My name is Akela Tomlinson and I'm a member of JustLeadershipUSA to close Riker's and Build Communities Campaign. Today I want to emphasize the importance of investing in our New York City public schools, especially those in low-income communities of color. Educational achievement and college completion are critical to ending cycles of oppression negatively impacting its communities. It is our job to give the students the tools necessary to succeed. As a result of a biased education system and the racial and economic disparities feeding the system overall, we are seeing that New York has the most outdated public school system in America, where less funding and fewer resources are given to schools with predominantly black and brown students from low-income homes. As someone who was diagnosed with ADHD in the fourth grade, I understand the importance of attending a school equipped with the necessary resources to help me succeed. The school I was attending did not, did what they could to provide me with extra help I needed. I showed only some improvement with the accommodations given. My mom made the decision to transfer me to private school, although it was

financial strain since my father was incarcerated. That's what provided me the one-on-one attention needed and concentrate on improving my skills in reading and math. My mother also enrolled me in piano class and kept me active by setting me up for [inaudible]. There are many children living with diagnosed or undiagnosed ADD or ADHD who are currently having a difficult time productively learning in a classroom. Our public schools with the resources they have cannot currently give students the individualized attention and range of activities they need. For too many New York City students their families cannot afford the extra support they need and when the school system doesn't provide it they end up interacting with school police officers instead. Proper funding for New York City public schools will not happen unless we cut funding in other areas. The departments that receive the most unnecessary funding is the NYPD and the DOC. We propose that the city decrease funding the aforementioned departments and invest in more education and in school.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

AKELA TOMLINSON: Thank you very much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Anthony Tassi.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

ANTHONY TASSI: Hi. Is it possible to share my screen for this testimony? Um, good evening, um, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I want to thank you for holding this historic, ah, hearing on the budget. Who would have ever thought that citizens of New York could testify on the budget from their, um, their kitchens in the Bronx and their living rooms from Brooklyn and everywhere in between. So I'm really honored to be here also with such a fierce group of advocates and, and smart citizens who have been testifying before you thus far. Ah, I'm from, my name is Anthony Tassi and I'm from Literacy Partners of New York. We are an adult literacy program that combines early childhood education, parenting, and adult literacy. In that way we can serve the entire family with strategic educational resources. We offer English classes for immigrant parents in partnership with

Head Starts and UPK programs. We offer a college transition program for young mothers in cooperation with CUNY. We also offer parent education programs in Spanish. And our parent education programs, which we call [inaudible] Familias Latinas, um, have been operating with a lot of success prior to COVID. During the COVID crisis we've converted them all to Zoom workshops and some of the results that we're achieving with those programs right now are major increases in knowledge of child development. 76% of the participants say they've learned more about child development. 54% of the participants increased their confidence and knowledge in using online platforms to help their children succeed, and 46% have increased their reading with children. And so this model shows that by serving parents effectively we can also have a huge influence over the education of their children. I wanted to recommend four priorities for a COVID recovery, and that's what we're talking about ultimately with this next year's budget. Twelve months is a long time and we're gonna be in this recovery for a long time. I wanted to just describe a quick agenda for parents and families. Number one, maintain funding for the city's first readers,

critically important to get early literacy promotion as effective and widespread as we can.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

ANTHONY TASSI: Number two, maintain and baseline funding for adult literacy service. Number three, expand funding for digital inclusion. And number four, create a percent for parents approach to funding educational and social services so that every program sets aside a percent that the council would designate to make sure parents are included and families are well served. Thank you so much, um, ladies and gentlemen of the council. I appreciate all of your efforts tonight and every day.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very much, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Henry Saylor.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

HENRY SAYLOR: Esteemed council members, my name is Henry Saylor. I live in Brooklyn and I'm a student at a public high school here in NYC. Thank you to those who have stayed to hear my testimony. I'm here today to testify against the cuts to Fair Student Funding and [inaudible] hiring freeze for teachers and social workers. Implementation of these

policies would take away everything that has helped me succeed as a student and would make education less successful for students across the city. My education has not been defined by the textbooks used in my school. It hasn't been defined by the papers I've written or even what classes I've taken. My education has been defined by the teachers. The interactions I've had with teachers, the individual questions I've asked and gotten answered, they ways they've pushed me as a student and as a person have helped made my education what it is today to help me succeed [inaudible]. FSF cuts would force schools to access teachers, making it harder for them to have these types of interactions with students. A hiring freeze only compounds that problem. Currently, students in the city face a lot of obstacles in getting an education. [inaudible] teachers would constitute an attack on students at a time when we need, ah, support more than ever. They would make the most important and impactful parts of education even harder to find. These are hard times and the cuts that this city is facing as a whole that are being discussed are painful. But I remind the council members that the way we educate students now

will have an impact on their lives and the life of the city for decades to come. Education is an essential service and every student matters. Many of the council members present have voiced unhappiness with the cuts to education. I thank you for that. But I urge you to follow your words with action. In the first Finance Committee hearing on this proposed budget Council Member Menchaca reminded the council of its ability to amend the budget or introduce one of its own. I echo this reminder and urge the council members to reject any budget that cuts FSF or includes a hiring freeze for teachers. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thank you for your work, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Natasha Cherry Perez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

NATASHA CHERRY PEREZ: Good evening and thank you for providing this time and opportunity. First, I would like to thank all of the City Council members for all that you do to hold this city up. You work tirelessly and you rarely take a day off, even on the weekends, and we appreciate all that you do. My name is Natasha Cherry Perez and I'm a native

New Yorker and I reside in East New York, where I was raised. I love the city and that's why I'm still here raising my family. I'm concerned about how we will bounce back from this pandemic, which has put a spotlight on the disparities that exist. Our city budget will, is one of the greatest resources that we can use to eliminate or alleviate these inequities in how we choose to incorporate the money will be a clear indicator of what we do, of what and who and we value. As a parent, I'm first and foremost concerned about education. I also work for Uncommon Schools and I advocate on behalf our 9000 students and families as well. I care about all children and all schools across the city, and we have to make sure that amid the budget cuts that we don't cut the money that makes it into the classroom, and we need the money to help support our teachers and leaders with professional development, including our district charter partnerships. This is not a time to divest in training. When our teachers learn and grow, so do our children. We also need to invest in our support staff, such as our guidance counselors, nurses, and social workers. We need them now more than ever. Summer and afterschool programming are also essential

to supporting our families as we try to get back to work. We need safe places for our children to thrive. Bridging the technology gap is also an investment we have to make. We also need to ensure that we're putting resources into supporting our homeless and mentally challenged New Yorkers. They need permanent solutions that empower and not cripple them. Our hospitals and nursing homes also require more resources so that we can withstand such a pandemic as this. Tough times come to teach us lessons and how we allocate our resources within the city will determine if we've learned. I have listened to many hearings and City Council is well aware of what's needed. We're counting on you to do what's necessary and, as I stated, this budget will reflect what and who this city truly values.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

NATASHA CHERRY PEREZ: Thank you for your time and be safe. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, thank you for your work, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Moranique Lambert.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

MORANIQUE LAMBERT: Hello, good evening, and thank you so much, um, for taking the time to listen to my testimony. My name is Moranique Lambert, in the 31st, 41st, ah, City Council district in Brooklyn. I am testifying today because I am very concerned that the budget cuts that are, that have been [inaudible].

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Oh no, did we lose her? OK.

MORANIQUE LAMBERT: Excuse me?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK, no, I thought we lost you, you were frozen.

MORANIQUE LAMBERT: Oh, OK. Can you see me?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Keep going.

MORANIQUE LAMBERT: OK.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes, keep going.

MORANIQUE LAMBERT: So as we, as we know, COVID, um, OK, as we know COVID has, um, shone a spotlight on the inequities in our society and that has just been further exasperated by all the things, ah, with this pandemic. The current budget, ah, proposal includes a 231 cut to education and 100 million of which comes from the Fair Schools Funding

program. I work for Uncommon Schools and Fair, ah, Fair Schools Funding is a major funding source for Title I schools, which most of our schools are. Um, and that will directly impact families that are most in need. Schools that have English language learners and special education students, students with IEPs, benefit directly from those funding. So taking it away will drastically hurt those students who have bit, bore the burden of the digital divide in remote learning. Um, and they've experienced and will experience the greatest amount of academic slide. So it's really important that we maintain education funding and we look at places like the police budget, where there is room to take away, and also school security we need to look at and how important that is when we're going to have a lot of the year be in remote learning. In addition, um, to the education cuts another [inaudible] budget that is worrisome is the proposed 1.39 cut to the affordable housing, ah, development plan that would devastate already rent-burdened communities and so we need to make sure that we look out for those [inaudible].

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

MORANIQUE LAMBERT: Thank you very much. Have a good night.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK [inaudible] thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Aida Castillo.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

AIDA CASTILLO: Hi, good evening. Good evening, Chairwoman Gibson, um, Chairman Dromm, members of the Finance Committee, City Council Speaker Johnson, and members of the New York City Council. My name is Aida Castillo. And not only, am, am I a project manager at the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporate, a community-based organization and settlement housing in the Cypress Hills and East New York Brooklyn community. This is home for me, too. Communities for Healthy Food is an innovative approach to expanding access to healthy food in six of New York City's economically challenged communities. We're very proud to be one of the organizations in this initiative that strives to integrate access to housing, affordable food, and to every aspect of our comprehensive community development work. Through resident outreach, nutrition education and cooking classes, creating new

and improved healthy food outlets, and generating food sector jobs. This allocation from City Council supports our programming that will expand access to healthy food and improve understanding of nutrition and healthy food choices while engaging communities to make positive changes related to food and nutrition choices. We're fortunate to partner with so many local and citywide organizations on this initiative, including Grow NYC, the Food Bank, the Cypress Tree Fulton Senior Center, the Gotham Health Center at East New York, New York Health and Hospitals, and the Brooklyn District Public Health Office. With these partners the HLDC addresses poverty and food access inequities, increases availability of high-quality affordable fruits and vegetables to our communities, provides cooking, gardening, and nutrition classes, creates healthy food markets where zero waste is practiced by collecting veggie scraps from the market and the community, which in a few months transforms itself into compost for our neighborhood community gardens. We provide jobs to neighborhood youth at our youth market farm stand. We facilitate SNAP enrollment and support community-led organizing campaigns around

food justice. The food and educational resources provided by these programs have made a real difference to our communities. Food access is a right and no one should go hungry. Our team has been working to connect our communities to health and nutritious food. Food is what we need to function, to be healthy, and to thrive.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

AIDA CASTILLO: During this pandemic all of us are working to alleviate food insecurity in the communities through remote platforms. We're working via telephone, email, text, and video. We're working hard to connect everyone to food and to resources to buy food. We're also helping residents, um, to keep healthy during this pandemic. Please continue to fund our programming for Communities for Healthy Food [inaudible] Development Corporation. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for your advocacy.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call our next panel, which will be Shane Correa, Surita Daftery, Herbert Murray, Dave Long, Arlene Jackson, Maria Iskaros, and Alyssa Willens.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

SHANE CORREA: [inaudible] accessing aid [inaudible] small businesses. From the justice system we've also continued our work in family civil and criminal judicial settings [inaudible]. We understand the magnitude of the cuts that are necessary to balance the budget. However, some of those proposed cuts include our program that demonstrate [inaudible].

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Are you still there? OK. We can't hear you.

UNIDENTIFIED: Hello?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK.

UNIDENTIFIED: Can you hear me now?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes, we can hear you now. Yes.

SHANE CORREA: All right, sorry for that, I'll start over. Ah, good evening, my name is Shane Correa, deputy director of [inaudible] Partnerships at the Center for Court Innovation. Fifteen years ago I was a CCI program participate. I was also a student in the South Bronx with two siblings in the justice system which were violent felons. If programs like those were at the Center for Court

Innovation it'd be a different path for my siblings because of the staff's commitment to our communities and the populations we serve. This commitment has continued through our programming. In some of the hardest hit communities in New York City we've given out over 60,000 maps, thousands of bottles of hand sanitizer, a thousand weekly meals [inaudible], hundreds of outreach calls to seniors, and digital workshops on accessing the [inaudible] for small businesses. In the justice system we've continued our work in family, civil, and criminal judicial settings as they [inaudible]. We understand the magnitude of the cuts that are necessary to balance the budget. However, some of those proposed cuts [inaudible] demonstrate efficiency and better outcomes in the justice system. I would like to propose [inaudible] on Project Reset. Yesterday we heard several DAs testify in support of Project Reset, which quickly and meaningfully disposes of cases without the [inaudible]. [inaudible] we've transitioned to new operations in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, and with the pandemic in the background we've launched the Staten Island [inaudible]. First, Reset is effective with

participants deemed most likely to have [inaudible] criminal investment. And next, it's cost effective, with a cost savings of up to $3500 per person diverted [inaudible]. Of those served, the program has already avoided over 5.8 million dollars from the cost of the system, not to mention the collateral costs avoid for individuals who can maintain their employment, state, and federal benefits because they don't have an unnecessary criminal record [inaudible]. We understand the hard [inaudible] cuts [inaudible] investment in [inaudible] diverting people make this [inaudible] investment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: All right, thank you so much. Thank you for your advocacy.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Surita Daftery.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

SURITA DAFTERY: Thank you. I want to thank the council, um, for your stamina with this hearing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and, um, thank you all of the council members for your leadership and fighting for resources for our communities. I'm testifying as an organizer with the Campaign to Close Riker's and Build Communities. Um, investing in resources to strengthen and stabilize

communities is a good financial decision and a moral one, even and especially [inaudible]. Last money the City Council held a hearing on the disparate impacts of COVID-19 in communities of color. Experts spoke about the cumulative effects, um, of COVID, of short-sighted cuts to social services that have left black and brown New Yorkers more vulnerable during this crisis. What has created even more devastating effects is the historical pattern of allowing law enforcement to fill the gaps left by an insufficient social safety net. That is a pattern this administration has promised to continue in this budget and the council simply cannot allow that to happen. Um, all of the things that people have spoken about for the last several hours should all be funded. A progressive city trying to support its residents to recover from COVID-19 would be rushing to fund all of those area. I want to speak briefly, um, I send a much longer written testimony, but about mental health. Um, the city committed last fall to developing an additional 380 units of justice-involved supported housing. What could we have achieved if those units were already available, providing people with serious mental illness with

housing and services instead of jail stays? Those units have been delayed because of this budget. Um, but the development of, of deeply affordable housing could have avoid the 600 people who are currently in New York City jails with a serious mental illness. If, even if, um, provider costs were increased to really meet the cost for supportive housing, the cost would be about $50,000 a year versus $330,000 a year to keep someone on Riker's Island. Furthermore, the current budget, ah, cuts proposes 10 million dollars in cuts to assertive community treatment teams, which would affect about 600 people living...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

SURITA DAFTERY: ...[inaudible]. Um, just to briefly wrap up, um, I want to say that many council members, um, have talked about protecting health and safety for New Yorkers. That will require meeting the needs of the most vulnerable New Yorkers and not simply protecting wealthier New Yorkers from poor New Yorkers as law enforcement has been used to do. Um, there are over 12 billion dollar in the combined NYPD and DOC budgets and this is a council that has found the courage to do hard things before and we believe you can do it again. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much for your advocacy, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Herbert Murray.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

HERBERT MURRAY: [inaudible] I'm here. Ah, my name is Herbert Murray. I am the campaign leader of the Close Riker's Island and a member of the Just Leadership USA. As a young adult I was arrested for a murder I did not commit and subsequently served 29 years in prison. Today I do not wish to focus on my time in my prison, but I'd like to speak about the community I grew up in. I grew up in Brooklyn in the 1960s and '70s before the financial crisis that some New Yorkers remember so well. My family and my community was [inaudible]. I lived in public housing. But the system that supported New Yorkers, no matter how much money they had, they had was still intact. Schools was open at night for recreation, tutoring, membership, and mentorship and other meaningful programs that kept us from the streets. Drugs were present in the community and for people who had or developed addiction they caused a lot of harm. That harm could have been best addressed by treatment. But instead

the city, the city took on an approach that did far more harm. The funding that had supported our community was taken out of the programs that was beneficial and we invested in policing and prison. We didn't know it at the time, but that was the beginning of mass incarceration. The jails at Riker's Island filled to [inaudible] and more was built but our community center closed. We have made some progress since then.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

HERBERT MURRAY: The crack epidemic is passed, though individuals and families who was criminalized are still discriminated against in employment, housing, and other basic programs. There's less people in jail now and, in jail now than there was in 30 years, even four years ago when the Close Riker's Island Campaign started. But we still have not taken the next step, reinvesting into the community that has been most harmed by mass incarceration. In fact, the mayor's budget, the mayor's budget proposal makes me worried that we are about to go back in the opposite direct with that same approach of the 1990s, starving social services to pay law enforcement. Consider this [inaudible]

and closing the NYPD budget is 10 billion dollars and the correction budget is almost 3. This money from departments must be reinvested back in the community that mass, that mass incarcerated has stole. I urge the city to reject the mayor's budget proposal and implement the bill community [inaudible]. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you Herbert, thank you for your advocacy. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dave Long.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

DAVE LONG: Ah, I would say thank you to the City Council, to the Finance Committee for allowing me to testify today and for your leadership during this crisis. My name is Dave Long. I'm the executive director of the Liberty Fund. Ah, please refer to my previously submitted written version for more detail. Since August 2017 the Liberty Fund has been critical of the city's overall decarceration efforts, first as a citywide charitable bail fund and now more recently through our ROR case management program for those who have been released into the community on their own recognizance. We have been remarkably successful in connecting low-income people

1 involved in the criminal justice system to social
2 services as they resolve their cases. Our pretrial
3 case management program helps participate access the
4 mental health, housing, and employment services
5 needed to lead stable and productive lives. Each ROR
6 client voluntarily receives a needs assessment, an
7 individual action plan with best fit service
8 referrals, and regular court reminders. We also give
9 food vouchers, hygiene kits, and Metro cards directly
10 to our participants. In response to COVID-19 we
11 quickly and effectively converted our ROR program to
12 a remote format to ensure the uninterrupted provision
13 of viable services during the pandemic. Our virtual
14 case management program has been adapted to include
15 daily wellness check-ins, connection to emergency
16 room resources, navigation, and navigation to the
17 state unemployment system and attorney communication.
18 My involvement in the criminal justice system spans
19 over 30 years in various capacities, as a police
20 officer, probation attorney, and director of
21 Alternative Intervention and Incarceration programs.
22 In my opinion, the Liberty Fund is key to the city's
23 continued innovation in the criminal and social
24 justice settings and is the key to ensure a fair and
25

more humane criminal justice system as we rebuild in a post-pandemic recovery. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much for your advocacy. Thank you for your work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Arlene Jackson.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

ARLENE JACKSON: Ah, good evening Council Member Dromm, Gibson, Speaker Johnson, staff, and committee members. Ah, this year's budget allocates over 14 billion dollars annually into the New York City Police Department, the Department of Correction, the City of, ah, the New York City Department of Probation, and district attorneys. The majority of the money is spent on the NYPD at 10 billion and Department of Correction at 2.5 billion. New Yorkers and even some police officers themselves are increasingly aware of the overreach of the New York City Police Department. The enormous size of the NYPD means that police officers are inserted into, in situations where they are, where they are at best not effective and at worst cause serious home. Sorry, I need to scroll down, sorry. Decades of mass, mass criminalization have extracted vast resources from black, brown, and poor communities. We all want to

live in strong, safe, healthy neighborhoods and our communities have long had solutions but not the support. The Build Communities Platform, developed in partnership with communities most impacted by mass criminalization outlines in great detail what can be, what can and should be done, I'm sorry, what can and should be done instead to heal our communities. There has never been a stronger argument for reducing the NYPD head count by merely implementing an, an NYPD hiring freeze. We could save at least 200 million in the next year. That money is badly needed for the social services that actually [inaudible]. New York City has made plans for some cost savings to the hiring freeze implemented for the New York City Department of Correction to address the excess of correctional officers resulting from a declining number of people in city jails. This transition must be addressed more quickly with a hiring freeze [inaudible] should result in about 150 million in cost savings this year. The current budget still reflect an excess of more than 5800 correction officers at a cost of 1.4 billion. Rather than maintaining employees in positions that are no longer needed, the city should develop a plan to proactively

transition those employees out of law enforcement agencies and into meaningful work...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ARLENE JACKSON: ...[inaudible] of equality, fairness, and respect, and, and so we need the City Council members to understand the importance of resourcing other priorities to urge the mayor to make up the boldest step he can towards a truly safer, fair, and more progressive city. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Arlene. Thanks for your advocacy. [laughs] You did it.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Maria Iskeros.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

MARIA ISKEROS: Hello. My name is Maria Iskeros. I live in Queens. I'm a member of Survived and Punished New York, and I want to [inaudible] public health for these remarks. I'm here making public testimony regarding the council's egregious proposed budget of over 455 million dollars towards our DA and special narcotics offices and the increase towards NYPD and DOC. The expense budget has over 3 billion dollars in cuts, including more than 800 million dollars in cuts to educational alone, and the

total elimination of the city's Summer Youth Employment Program. Comparing this 800 million dollar cut to education to the mere 33 million dollar cut in these prosecuting offices dictates exactly what we've been seeing in our city over the past decade and more. The mayor's budget reflects an addiction to mass incarceration and domestic militarization, no matter how just and community-oriented he claims to be. One [inaudible] for police and cages has gone up consistently in the last decade despite steady decreases in all kinds of crime and countless studies show absolutely no correlation between jailing and public safety. At a time when our communities' most urgent needs are health justice and economic recovery the last thing we should do is throw even an higher share of our public resources into the violent systems of surveillance and control. Even less coherent is the city's continued commitment to pouring more than 10 billion dollars to building new jails, which will likely be the largest capital expenditure in the city's budget for the next decade. In 10, 20, 50 years when we talk about this moment in history, please ask yourselves as City Council members do you want to say that during NYC's most

awful public health crisis, where tens of thousands of New Yorkers have died in a matter of weeks due to government negligence you decided to cut 47% from youth and community development and decided to increase policing, corrections, and still allocate a deplorable amount of over 455 million dollars towards prosecuting? We cannot police and prosecute our way out of this crisis. I'm ashamed, I'm furious, I'm disappointed, and I'm unsurprised. The only way to recover from our current crisis is...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

MARIA ISKEROS: ...[inaudible] I've been asking for over the course of decades affordable, low-income housing, free transit, youth programs, improvements in NYCHA, and other projects that will make it possible for historically marginalized people to not only recovery but stay healthy and thrive. NYC is saying enough is enough. [inaudible] right now, public health safety, and we must close Riker's now without adding more to the city's jailing and policing budgets.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for testimony and your advocacy. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alyssa Willens.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

ALYSSA WILLENS: Hello. I'm a healthcare worker and former trauma researcher. From that perspective I want to echo and stand with the others who have already spoken in calling for cuts to NYPD's budget. I want to be clear that this is not about how many staplers are in use as shown by an expenditure analysis. It's about the entire philosophy of public safety employed by the city that is and has been historically racist and hurts disabled people. The American Diabetes Association has an entire guidance for lawyers about what to do if someone's experiencing hypoglycemia, has an encounter with law enforcement, because our law enforcement does not know how to safely respond to people experiencing altered mental states who need medical and psychological support. Policing and incarceration are strategies for solving issues within our communities. They're not the only strategies and not the ones that are most effective. They're not the best ways to prevent overdoses or treat substance use disorders [inaudible] mental health crisis, ensure the health and safety of sex

workers and survivors of domestic violence, to address the compounding effects of lack of access to housing, health care, and financial well-being. Policing assumes that violent removal of someone from the community will reduce violence overall. Yet we know as why mothers are taken from small children and locked away for the crime of having a positive drug test, ah, with the possibility even be deported, that this adversely affects the development of that children for a long time. This council has talked a lot about many of these issues before over and over and it has come to the conclusions that actions should be taken to reduce the number of people in our jails. Many have mentioned it is shameful to ramp up immigration enforcement or increase the jail population during a pandemic. But these actions are only happening because city funds make them possible. Without investing in [inaudible] necessary there will be always be people who engage in criminalized behavior to survive. And the criminalization of that survival does not lead to less violence, to healthy or safer communities. As others have said, the arrests for social distancing have been racist. The head of the Sergeants' Benevolent Association

recently called the head of DOH a bitch on Twitter and was not asked to take the tweet down. It's still up. What model is it for the community when those in charge of holding us accountable to our laws are not themselves held accountable? What does it say to the community when these behaviors are rewarded, even more resources...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

ALYSSA WILLENS: ...[inaudible]. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for your advocacy. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jessica Hall.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

JESSICA HALL: Greetings. Ah, my name is Jessica Hall and I'm a social worker and activist who's worked with marginalized populations throughout New York City for over 30 years. I'm the founder and executive director of Prison Writes. Prison Writes brings writing workshops to people who are incarcerated, detained, and formerly incarcerated for therapy, advocacy, literacy, and more. I hope someday my work with these populations will be obsolete. I founded Prison Writes out of my

commitment to social justice and in recognition of incarceration as the civil rights issue of our day. We must not allow the NYPD to hijack the budget at this critical time. Defunding communities while flooding them with police is a recipe for disaster. Young people who have testified today know what they're talking about and I fully support their efforts. In my work with young adults at Riker's Island I meet extraordinary people who have been betrayed for our racist, classist system. These young people are smart, funny, loving, sensitive, thoughtful, and strong. And we need them in our community. A budget that invests in communities providing health care, housing, education, and employment is the only way to ensure safety and security for all New Yorkers. Policing should always be a last resort. Videos of NYPD viciously attacking people of color are painful demonstrations of why we cannot police a pandemic. When the jail population has plummeted but the number of corrections officers have not correspondingly declined, when children can't be in school but school safety officers' jobs are protected, while summer youth employment is on the cutting block, communities of color will be under

assault. We have learned in the past few months how quickly we can adjust to communicating, working, and functioning as a city new and unprecedented ways. Redirecting the 14 billion dollars allocated for policing will foster real security. The pandemic has highlighted the deeply imbedded inequalities and racism of our society. There is an opportunity now to begin to work for correcting them and how funds are allocated in this new budget. In hours of testimony today we have heard so many examples from respected community-based leadership and programs.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

JESSICA HALL: This makes me so proud to be a New Yorker. Thank you to Chair Gibson and Dromm and members of the Finance Committee for your time and commitment to our communities citywide. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Jessica. Thank you, Jessica, for your work and your advocacy.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be Boris Santos, Debra Act, Elizabeth Clay Roy, Hannah Anusha, Isordia Fields, Julia Durante Martinez, Marcos Barrios, and Yasha Morgan. Boris Santos.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

BORIS SANTOS: Hey, good evening everyone, can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes, we can hear you.

BORIS SANTOS: Ah, apologies, my video isn't working, but I'll just move forward. Um, good evening, my name is Boris Santos and I'm a proud supporter of the East New York Community Land Trust, um, um, and a member of the Interim Steering Committee of the CLT. Um, prior to officially stating my demand of the city I want to highlight some facts that are essential to my demand. Um, the only fully established CLT in NYC as of 2019 was the Cooper Square CLT. And I use the words fully established because in the city they are an idealism to look up to in terms of their portfolio and what they have in stock. Um, so they've been the only fully established CLT in NYC as of 2019, ah, the Cooper Square CLT. However, as of last year and due to the 800, just north of $800,000 in discretionary funding that the city invested in the CLT initiative, there are upwards of a dozen CLTs that have been established or on route of being established. The

East New York CLT is one of them. We have held many forums, town halls to, to increase community participation and form and interim steering committee. We have established a mission statement and held several meetings to discuss the production of bylaws and we have poured countless amount of volunteer time to generally set up the infrastructure to move us closer to having a board. A portion of discretionary funding investment that the city made in the 2020 fiscal year has helped us, ah, give the resources to make that progress. This includes allowing for a full-time salaried coordinator and the materials [inaudible] outreach. I quickly want to thank Hanna Anuchay who's, ah, on the call, um, on this conference call. She is a coordinator who has been vital in this effort. CLTs are vital in ending the speculative trends of the real estate market forces that have led to displacement of people of color. It might not be a panacea to any displacement, but it is one pillar among others that can help alter the reality that we see in East New York. The reality is that LLC and predatory equity companies are the major purchasers of homes in our region today. The city has already pledged to

temporarily end the pilot program that will legalize basements as apartments, another form of...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

BORIS SANTOS: ...[inaudible] living. Um, just wrapping up quickly. This was a promise made through the East New York rezoning, but without adequate representation as a publication the city highlighted in a piece, we currently have no council member, it is politically easy to do so. Please do not fail East New Yorkers by ending funding for CLTs. We cannot be a community that gets the shortest end of the stick every time. We have [inaudible] City in Community District 5, which has seen the most amount of deaths out of any other community. Please, again, don't let us be the shortest end of the stick. Just to wrap up, I demand that the city continue funding the CLT initiative, this time with an allocation of 1.5 million dollars. I want to conclude by saying these are difficult times and it is easy and in some cases necessary to make cuts to certain services in order to be fiscally responsible. But let's not be too quick to specifically cut funding that will stall progress on measures that would help disintegrate the very same disparities that we are seeing now as a

result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather be quicker to cut finding to those institutions that have let us down time and time again and have not proven to be statistically successful. Institutions like the NYPD whose budget has been voted year after year during the mayor's tenure must be cut before vital initiatives like the CLT. Thrive also hasn't been proven to yield results. Um, so please consider this demand. Thank you for your testimony. God bless y'all.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Boris. Thanks for your advocacy.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Debra Act.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

DEBRA ACT: Good evening, and I'd like to thank the Finance Committee in giving us this time to advocate, ah, for our [inaudible]. My name is Debra Act and I've been a long-term East New York resident for 10-plus years. I am also, I am also a member of the East New York Community Initiative Land Trust Steering Committee. The East New York CLT Initiative is an organization of community leaders and activists dedicated to preserving affordability for future generations and providing a vehicle to create

generational wealth. East New York CLT has been in existence since January of this year. In this new normal virtual world we have come a long way. We have just held our first virtual town hall meeting with much success. We look forward to the second one to be held on Tuesday, March 26, at 6:30. Why do I want to see a CLT in East New York? I am anti-displacement, pro-local home ownership, pro-local business ownership, and want to protect generational wealth and want to expand green spaces. The COVID-19 crisis has made our mission all the more urgent. Financial crisis have had a devastating impact on the East New York residents. These same crisis are an opportunity for predatory financial interests from outside the community to harass East New York homeowners. CLTs protect home owners from economic downturns. Home owners and CLT-owned homes are nine times less likely to be in foreclosure proceedings than the traditional mortgage of [inaudible]. It is more pressing than ever that the City Council renew discretionary funding for the citywide Community Land Trust Initiative...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

DEBRA ACT: ...[inaudible] 2021. East New York residents deserve and are ready for this change. We must grow the connection with the use for our community. East New York CLTs are for us and by us. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Debra. Thanks for your advocacy. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hannah Anusha.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

HANNAH ANUSHA: OK. Um, good evening, council members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. Um, my name is Hannah Anusha and I am a coordinator of the East New York Community Land Trust Initiative. And I work at Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. The COVID-19 crisis has made our effort to create a CLT in East New York all the more urgent. We know that financial crises have a devastating impact on East New York residents. Currently in East New York real estate shell companies are buying up homes with delinquent mortgages and selling them for over a million dollars. From January to March of this year 60% of home sales in East New York went to real estate LLCs. What CLTs can do is protect homeowners from economic

downturns. Homeowners in CLTs are nine times less likely to be in foreclosure proceedings than those with traditional mortgage, ah, arrangements. City Council funding is critical for the development of our CLT initiative in East New York, so we are asking the City Council to please support the citywide CLT initiative. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very much, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Julia Durante Martinez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JULIA DURANTE MARTINEZ: Hi, good evening Chair Dromm and committee members, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Julia Durane Martinez and I'm the community land trust campaign coordinator at New Economy Projects. Our organization works with community groups throughout the city to fight for economic justice and to support cooperative [inaudible] and extend community-led development. New Economy Projects is the coordinating organization for the citywide Community Land Trust Initiative, ah, which includes 14 partner organizations, some of them the other groups on this

panel, ah, that seeks discretionary funding for 2021. Now more than ever New York City must invest in proven community-led institutions like CLTs to address critical community needs and ensure a just recovery for all New Yorkers, particularly for low-income and communities of color that have been hardest hit by COVID-19 and housing crises. We urge the City Council to renew funding for the CLT initiative for the coming year. The CLT initiative directly addresses New York City's affordability crisis by developing community land trusts and permanently affordable housing, commercial space, and other community needs. With fiscal year 2020's support the CLT initiative has made major progress toward the formation and expansion of CLTs in all five boroughs. From the northwest Bronx to Jackson Heights to East New York, community land trusts are mobilizing to respond to community needs and stabilize neighborhoods. And history has also shown community land trusts to be more resilient in the wake of crises. From the 2008 crash to 2017 hurricanes in Puerto Rico. A just recovery from this crisis will require strong city support for neighborhood institutions that can stem evictions,

foreclosures, and speculation, and facilitate accountable rebuilding in the wake of COVID-19. CLTs, along with worker and financial co-ops and other shared ownership models must be a part of New York City's recovery to ensure racial and economic equity and self-determination. With council support, community land trusts have made major strides in New York City and have the potential to redefine communities' relationships to land and housing. We urge the committee and the council to continue building on those progress with renewed discretionary funding support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very much for your advocacy. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Isordia Fields.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ISORDIA FIELDS: Hello, good evening. My name is Isordia Fields and I would like to thank the council for your time today. Um, I have been a member of the East New York community for approximately 30 years now and I am a member of the steering committee for the East New York Community Land Trust. The East New York Community Land Trust Initiative is an organization of community leaders

and activists that are dedicated to preserving affordability for future generations and providing a vehicle to create generational wealth. We ask that the City Council renew discretionary funding for the citywide Community Land Trust Initiative for this fiscal year. Problems that the CLT address include the local housing crisis. This crisis existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and it's even worse now. Unfortunately, our, ah, city is suffering from, ah, a homeless crisis, a huge homelessness crisis, and we seek to increase home ownership and preserve affordability within East New York. As a local realtor, I have seen how drastically property prices have increased to displace people who have lived in the community for years and decades. And, um, even rentals at this point in time are extremely high. So people who have lived in this neighborhood for years and generations can no longer afford to live here. I actually had a situation where a young lady who, ah, was, inherited an apartment from her grandmother and she was able to afford the rent at the rate that it was. However...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ISORDIA FIELDS: ...when she [inaudible] another place she could not find another place for the same rental amount. So, so housing is not as affordable as it should be for people and people are forced to move out of the community. And we would like to change the narrative...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK.

ISORDIA FIELDS: ...for East New York and surrounding communities. Thank you for your testimony.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much for your testimony and thanks for your advocacy. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Albert Scott.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ALBERT SCOTT: Hi, hi, good evening. My name is, um, Albert Scott and I'm with the East New York Community Land Trust Initiative. Um, again, the East New York Community Land Trust Initiative and activists dedicated, ah, to preserving affordability for future generations and providing [inaudible] to create generational wealth. And as my colleagues have mentioned, um, earlier the, the reasons why we do support CLTs is because we are anti-displacement.

We are pro-local home ownership. We are pro-local business, um, ownership, and more importantly we want to have the next generation of, um, of, um, home owners to have the opportunity to purchase properties. As it stands now, in communities such as East New York over 60% of, um, March home sales actually were purchased by LLCs. Um, one of those sales was for a family home for 1.1 million and in a community such as, um, East New York a rich hard-working resident can actually afford a 1.1 million dollar. And what a CLT would allow us to do would allow us to dictate or actually re-utilize as a tool to allow us to help a) level the playing field, get communities such as East New York an opportunity to fight back, especially to fight back the, ah, pro-, the, ah, as I like identify, the, ah, post-COVID opportunists, real estate opportunists that will be preying on our community as things start to reverse back to quote unquote this new normal and in order for the CLT to do our job effectively, um, we urge you to fully fund, ah, Community Land Trust Initiative so we can continue to do the critical work of establishing, um, the East New York CLT and better

fight for our community. Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Albert. Thank you for your advocacy and your work, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Elizabeth Clay Roy.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ELIZABETH CLAY ROY: Thank you to the council chairs, members, and staff for your work to help the city through this crisis. My name is Elizabeth Clay Roy and I'm the executive director of Take Root Justice, a legal services organization that serves over 2000 clients across New York City each year to advance racial and economic justice. This is an abbreviated version of my written testimony. Access to justice is essential for families to access resources for survival, and let's use what we know about the social determinant of health for a just and equitable recovery. What is our societal corollary to the personal protective equipment that's crucial for us to prevent and recover from this virus? In the community-level actions we can take to ensure those at greatest risk stay well. The following are recommendations to maintain and [inaudible] levels for what I call public protective infrastructure that

our society needs. First, safe housing. Housing is a human right and one of the most important public health interventions. Persistent mold, pest, um, issues, water outages, hot water disruption, and extended elevator outages are harmful to health. Legal advocacy for tenants helps them advocate for safe housing quickly and get repairs done, which is essential for healthy living. Housing stability, homelessness was a crisis pre-COVID and affordability was a central issue. Funding for Stabilizing NYC and affordable housing resources at the council district level are essential. So organizers and attorneys can speak with tenants about their rights and resources. Economic stability, the low-wage worker initiative has enabled organizations like Take Root Justice to handle hundreds of employment-related matters, and we're seeking, seeing increased demand to help with complex appeals for unemployment, particularly for, ah, marginalized immigrant New Yorkers. Um, and the work of the legal services for the working poor coalition is more important than ever. We help over 30,000 New Yorkers. It's the only funding that specifically targets the civil legal needs of working people to ensure continued self-sufficiency for

working families struggling to survive in New York. Preserving jobs and businesses, so we know this is quite possibly the end...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time ends now.

ELIZABETH CLAY ROY: ...[inaudible] businesses that are owned and staffed by people of color. In closing, continued funding for worker cooperative business development initiative, the commercial lease assistance program are absolutely essential for small businesses to be able to recover and thrive, and we know how important that is for communities of color and for New York's entire fabric. Community land trust work is also essential, as my colleagues have described, and thank you so much for your time tonight and your actions ahead.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Elizabeth, thanks for your work on behalf of Take Root Justice. We appreciate it. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Reverend John Flack.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

REVEREND JOHN FLACK: Thank you all for, um, ah, hearing my testimony. My name is John Flack. I'm a pastor in Washington Heights at Our Saving [inaudible] Church. I especially want to applaud

and, um, ah, give a shout-out to all the council members who have been on this call since 8:30 this morning. Thank you for your perseverance and persistence. I've come online ostensibly to ask for the preservation of New York City's curbside composting program. But, ah, composting is really a symbolic issue. The real question that faces our city and the budgets of all the organizations and that call the city home is what kind of city can we build now. About a decade ago a Swedish pastor, who was both my friend and mentor, came to visit my family in New York. We made dinner for them and because he's a good guy he helped, ah, wash up. The first thing he did was look at me and say where's the organic trash, and I said we don't have any organic trash. And he said that's a sin. In Sweden by law we put all our organics into one stream and they use the, the gas the organics make to fuel our buses. So I submit to you that this is the kind of city we should dream of building, a city that adapts to the coming climate crisis, reduces the damage it will bring, and puts green jobs first. And I heard the comptroller say that New York City faces a revenue loss of 7 billion dollars in two months, and I know

the people on this committee know much better than I do the challenges that face the city and that you will not be able to make all the choices you prefer to make. I'm a father as well as a pastor, and of course I want the best schools for my daughters, the most beautiful parks, and I know that nothing, none of these things can receive adequate funding in the near future. We live in a new gilded age, though, when the wealthiest among us do not pay their fair share and the great corporations take parts of it all. We must change this. Budgets are documents that show our true values and our ability to face our programs with reason. Our city must combat climate change or what's to come will make COVID-19 look like the glory days of yesteryear. And if COVID-19 has taught us nothing us, we are only as strong as the most vulnerable among us. So our city must dig itself out of the COVID-19 hole...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

REVEREND JOHN FLACK: These are not competing aims. Green jobs and a green city is the best way through these dark times. We keep you in our prayers. You face tremendous pressure and I pray that you are able to face the challenges that are

ahead with clear vision and compassion. And I want to say, especially to everybody who's serving our city right now.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, Pastor. Thank you for your work and your advocacy.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yasha Morgan.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

YASHA MORGAN: Dear council members, my name is Yasha Morgan and I live in the Bronx. I am an eighth-grade science teacher and a brother to a person suffering from mental illness. In my professional and personal life I have seen how mental illness if not properly treated can dramatically change a person's life and continue to add compound stressors. I am here today to share my story and to ask for your support in expanding mental health resources. I would like to emphasize that New York City should not be cutting social services resources, especially when people need them most. And we do not have to. We need to divest from law enforcement agencies that have been overfunded for decades and redirect that money to community resources that truly keep us safe. My little brother was four credits away from graduating from the Borough of Manhattan

Community College. During his last semester he became neurotic and aggressive. It wasn't long before he ended up homeless and roaming the streets of New York City. A few months ago I got a call from a mental institution in Connecticut saying they had my little brother in custody. But that was all the information they was allowed to give to me. The Connecticut mental institution later on released my brother back into the streets of New York City. I currently do not know the exact location of my little brother, but I do believe he is somewhere in New York City, homeless, roaming the streets in a time when COVID-19 is running rampant. I often wonder if New York City had more mental health support would my little brother receive the help that he so desperately needs. The [inaudible] Build Communities Platform on dailyus.org Build Communities outlines so many things New York City could be doing for people like my little brother. For violent mental health urgent care clinics, expanded crisis respite center, and diversion centers and expanded intense mobile treatment teams to work with my brother and even, working with my brother when even he is not in the state of mind to make it [inaudible]. We need you...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

YASHA MORGAN: Thank you. We need you, the council members, who understand the importance of resourcing other priorities to urge the mayor to make the boldest step he can towards a truly safer, fairer, and more progressive city by aligning our budget with those values. Thank you and appreciate your time. Sincerely, Yasha Morgan, educator and brother.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Oh, thank you, Yasha, for your story, and certainly we're sorry to hear about your brother and what he went through. I represent the Bronx, so if you want to reach out to me I am more than happy to help you in your efforts to find your brother so that we can get him the help and services that he really needs, OK? So please reach to us, and thank you so much for your testimony tonight. We appreciate it.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Marcos Barrios.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will begin now.

MARCOS BARRIOS: Can you hear me? Hello?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes, go ahead, [inaudible].

MARCOS BARRIOS: Thank you for the opportunity for me to state today I'm a member of JustLeadershipUSA advocating for the Build Communities Campaign. Today I want to emphasize the importance of certain resources that should be addressed, especially during these unprecedented moment in our city. Even as we face economic challenges, I truly believe we can immediately invest in the type of community resources that can create safety by strengthening and stabilizing communities. As [inaudible] during this health crisis there are disparities in our New York City. Our residents have faced challenges in public health, poverty, and inequality due to the city's misalignment of its budget priorities that still thrives in the face of those values such as equality, fairness, and respect. New Yorkers during each budget cycle casually make the case for desperately needed funding for housing, education, libraries, health care, youth programs, and more. But in each budget cycle they walk away with only, with only a fraction of what is needed. Those past choices lead to the preventable deaths we are seeing, seeing now among people who are homeless and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on New

Yorkers of color. While we are aware that we cannot unfortunately necessarily rely on the federal government during these times, the truth is that New York City has the resources to address many of the needs that currently go unmet. With vision and political coverage we can move those resources to where they are truly needed. We can do this even in the face of cuts from the state by beginning to divesting from the norm, overfunded systems of law enforcement. Over 600 people currently housed in city jails have a diagnosed serious mental illness and over 50% of people in the jails have some diagnosed mental, ah, health need. I have been detained on Riker's Island and I can tell you with certainty that is not an effective treatment environment.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARCO BARRIOS: Investments in mental health resources are one of the most important parts of the Build Communities [inaudible] and these are expand site-based treatment, which includes greater more of the things that are working, like crisis respite centers to create resources that do not exist, like public mental health urgent care centers.

Expand [inaudible]-based treatment, including further investing in programs like Similar to Act, Fact, and MIT that already exist and are working well. And expand supportive housing by adjusting funding and eligibility requirements of the [inaudible] supportive housing initiative. Ah, thank you for this time.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Marcos. Thanks for your work again.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Darrin Mack.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DARRIN MACK: Thank you, Jerome. Thank you, committee members. Um, my name is Darrin Mack. I'm a member of the Close Riker's Campaign. I'm also a native New Yorker and a survivor of Riker's Island. Um, so first I want to say that I believe that most New Yorkers believe in justice and equity and we live in a city that espouses justice and equity for all. However, for decades New York City's budget priorities have not been just nor equitable. It has reflected the interests of the rich and expanded the illegal punishment system while neglecting the poor and worker class New Yorkers. The structural and institutional safety nets of our city, especially in

communities of color, have been under-resourced and practically abandoned. COVID-19 has made this clear. New York City should not be cutting social services when people are most in need, and we don't have, and we do not have to. For every dollar spent on the NYPD and Department of Corrections only 29 cents go to homeless services, 25 cents to the Department of Health, and 12 cents to the youth and community developer. Directly impacted communities want investments that support communities to manage [inaudible] so that it does not escalate to harm, and when harm has happened to intervene with models that focus on restoration rather than criminalization, on healing, not punishment, and our communities, not the carceral system. We want investments to create and support community centers with no affiliation with police. We want investment in diversion to incarceration with no affiliation with police. We want investment to expand violence interruption programming that have no affiliation with the police. We need a budget to build communities. We are in a time where there's no middle ground. We are either for a just budget or against it. We are either for

equity or against it. We are either advocating for the perpetuation of the...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

DARRIN MACK: ...status quo in this time of crisis or advocating for change. Courageous in the face of power. Thank you for your work and thank you for everything the City Council has been doing to advocate for justice.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Darrin.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Darrin, [inaudible] it's Corey. Thanks for all your...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Hey, Speaker. [laughs]

SPEAKER JOHNSON: ...thanks for all your work.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Darrin.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be David Calvert, Juanimo Aquoya, Shannon Hummel, Suzanna Waldman, Rachel Gasdick, Scott Daly, and Rachel Citron.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DAVID CALVERT: OK. Ah, good evening, everybody. I have a lot of respect for all the council members that are on right now. Thank you

very much. I just tweeted to say so. Ah, I'm David Calvert, coordinator of the Youth Build NYC, Youth Build, speaking on behalf of the 10 Youth Build programs located in all five boroughs, operated by some of the finest community service institutions in the city. We're facing now the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm proud to report that every Youth Build site in the city successfully did transform its operations in March from onsite classrooms and community-based training to functional remote formats and kept our students on track and thriving. The work goes on. Youth Build staff are already planning and training for the new programmatic environment as the pandemic continues in the coming year. Youth Build directors work miracles with small budgets. Youth Build students are irrepressible. For the coming year, federal Department of Labor Youth Build grants will support four of the Youth Build programs, but six will face elimination without the basic continuing council support. Since 2014 the council has stepped in to fill that funding gap by allocating 2.1 million through a citywide speaker initiative of discretionary funds to ensure Youth Build opportunities in every borough, to ensure that all 10

Youth Build sites in the five boroughs can serve 600-plus Youth Build students in fiscal 21. We urgently request [inaudible] continuity funding of 2.1 million in the citywide speaker initiative for Youth Build. We accept the new challenges ahead. We're on it. We need the council to accept the challenge, too, to hold steady for youth services, for young people to get a decent second chance, for our city to surge forward instead of retreat and retrench, to help ensure productivity of pride for otherwise disconnected youth. Let's do this together.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: All right, thank you David. Thanks for your work on behalf of Youth Build, thank you.

DAVID CALVERT: I appreciate that.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Juanimo Acquoya.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JUANIMO ACQUOYA: Hi, good evening. My name is Dr. Juanimo Acquoya and I am the AVP of the Help Getting to Ready Learn Initiative at the Children's Health Fund, um, and I am also a lifelong advocate for promoting healing in schools. Our program exists to address health needs rooted in social, racial, and economic inequities by creating

relevant content and training that builds the capacity in the highest-need communities in the city with technical assistance, training, and our online platform. We appreciate the council's support of our work with families and educators citywide over the last four years. Thank you, Speaker Johnson, Chairs Dromm and Gibson, Council Member Grodenchik, Adams, and Koslowitz especially. Thank you for highlighting the needs of communities of color that we knew were struggling before the COVID-19 pandemic. Our program has trained over 4000 educators and parents citywide, reaching over 200 elementary schools working primarily in the schools that have the highest numbers of students in temporary housing, immigrant families, black and brown students, um, and over the last six years we've notably been able to improve schools' and families' ability to respond to trauma, as noted by many of the other speakers today. With the onset of COVID-19 it's, and its unilateral impact on life, particularly with New York City's school-age children and families, the demand for our work has only increased. Our existing platform, supported by the city, has allowed us to adapt all of our work to create a space for educators and families to come

1 together to discuss topics, including trauma
2 sensitivity, meeting families' social needs, social
3 emotional well-being, care for the caregiver, and
4 community resilience and healing. Our website
5 utilization has increased by almost 300% between the
6 first week after school closed and the second week,
7 um, in our COVID online programming that was done
8 parallel to remote learning. As we move forward we
9 want to be able to continue to meet...
10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
11 JUANIMO AQUOYA: ...[inaudible]. We know
12 that the city is having many challenges with the
13 budget and are sensitive to that, but we request, we
14 are requesting a renewal because we believe that this
15 program is imperative to the communities hardest hit,
16 um, to help them recover and thrive post the
17 pandemic. Thank you for your time. I really
18 appreciate your persistence and stamina.
19 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, thanks so
20 much for your advocacy and your work. Thank you.
21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Ah, Chair Gibson, I
22 have to hop off for a few minutes, but I'll be back
23 on.
24 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK.
25

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: No problem.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Shannon Hummel.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SHANNON HUMMEL: Hi there. My name is Shannon Hummel and I'm [inaudible] director of Cora Dance Center and [inaudible]. We provide free and pay what you can, um, services to over 500 students annually. We turn no one away based on what or if they can pay. 90% of our students are on scholarship. And the DYCD funds allow that to happen. Um, we are really a second home for hundreds of family. We provide afterschool pickup. We provide, um, food daily to our kids. Attire, homework help. We train their parents to check email, to do scheduling. We provide internships and we provide mentorship from 20 of the most beautiful performing artists that I have ever met in my life, and the result is that 99% of our young people, um, get into the top choices for their middle school, high school, and colleges, and I have been the director of Cora since 1998. We've been through 9/11 and the crash of '08. We have been through, um, Hurricane Sandy, and so I anticipated cuts. But when

I saw the disproportionate cuts to the DYCD budget while the NYPD was still intact in the name of safety, I felt that that was a pretty unsophisticated definition of safety. Um, I have a pretty unique perspective as an artist. I have a lot of police officers in my family and my instinct was to go to them. They know my work and they know the safety that's provided by organizations like Cora who are getting thousands of youth engaged in things that are meaningful, that reduce truancy and delinquency, and they believe that this is a budget that diminishes safety. It exponentially increases the chances of officers having negative interactions with youth, of having harm done to youth and to them, and I want those advocating for more NYPD and no DYCD fortification to consider that that is the situation that they're advocating for their officers at well, as well. Um, New York City minus the arts plus more NYPD does not equal safety. That is a, that is an equation that I'd like to thank Mike...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

SHANNON HUMMEL: ...ah, Mike Ilego, my student, um, for creating that, and it has a simple meaning and that I believe is true. Young people of

color are already over policed in our communities, and I ask the council to reinstate funds for DYCD because the arts heal and the arts inspire and that makes community safer. I'd also like to ask the NYPD to advocate for that fortification of the DYCD funding as well, because we are a part of keeping you safe and this community safe. So thank you so much. And thank you, Council Member Menchaca, for all your advocacy.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Aww, he's, he's still here with us. Thank you, thank you Shannon, thanks to you and your team for your advocacy, thank you. Thanks, Council Member Menchaca. [laughs]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Suzanna Waldman.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SUZANNA WALDMAN: Good evening. My name is Suzanna Waldman and on behalf of Friends of Ireland Academy I thank the Committee on Finance for this opportunity and for sticking around to hear all of us. Um, for 30 years Friends has provided a lifeline, bringing educational, economic, and emotional empowerment opportunities to justice-involved youth. And the mayor's budget claims to focus on community safety, but as many people have

said already, prioritizing funding for the NYPD over youth services is not the way to do this. The city's understanding of what keeps us safe must be rooted in and defined by the communities that it serves. We hope at Friends that in sharing our experience of working with youth who experience high rates of victimization and incarceration that we can underscore the vital importance of sustaining our rich network of community organizations. Our youth reentry network's four-year demonstration pilot with the city came to an end in March, and we had hoped and expected that our services and impact would continue with city funds. Our team of youth advocates worked every day with youth on Riker's and when they returned home. One of the 3500 young people that we met in custody over the four years was Ray, a 19-year-old high school graduate. As the coronavirus hit Riker's and in part due to our advocacy at Friends, the judge released Ray. He did not qualify for a laptop from the city so Friends raised privates funds to get him one. Today we continue to provide career and educational counseling to him remotely. We're working with him on his college application and through our career center Ray

secured at job at [inaudible]. But as of July 1 the advocate who works with Ray and almost 30 other staff like her will no longer be funded. We know that justice-involved youth faced steep barriers before COVID-19. And they are only growing worse. And the connections and support to help navigate this new world will not be provided by NYPD intervention and more funding for jails. It is...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

SUZANNA WALDMAN: ...[inaudible] vulnerable but resilient young people that we implore the city to reconsider the budget and ensure that these lifelines do not end at this critical moment. Thank you. And thanks again for listening.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Suzanna. Thank you to you and your staff for all your work. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rachel Gasdick.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

RACHEL GASDICK: Hi, good, good evening, City Council members. I'm Kevin House and I'm the chief [inaudible] with the New York Edge and I'm testifying on behalf of Rachel Gasdick, our CEO.

Thank you for the City Council's long-standing support of New York Edge...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [inaudible].

RACHEL GASDICK: ...formerly known, formerly known as Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes.

RACHEL GASDICK: ...[inaudible]. I'm here tonight in support of New York Edge's 1 million dollar allocation under the council's afterschool enrichment initiative. 28 years ago we were created at the suggestion of the council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for kids attending summer school. From these beginnings we've grown into the largest provider of summer school and afterschool programming, serving over 40,000 young people and their families at 134 schools throughout the five boroughs. Our programming has consistently and proactively, ah, evolved in order to meet the needs of New York City's children and families, the most recent example being our response to COVID-19. With the city, ah, closing the public schools we took immediate steps assisting principals and teachers as they transition to remote learning. As we donated

over 300 laptops and devices to students in need, we successfully rolled out online programming and activities for students participating in 101 of our afterschool programs. In anticipation of summer and the need of our city's youth, ah, months after self-isolation we formulated a trauma-informed approach to summer camp that can be delivered online. In order for us to provide programming this summer and next school year, either remotely or using a social distance model and for us to continue to positively engage the youth of our city, ah, council support is needed. Thirteen years ago our citywide funding was reduced by 50% when the council filled a budget hole at DOE. Another funding cut would be detrimental to our mission...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

RACHEL GASDICK: ...ability to serve the most, ah, at youth risk. Ah, we have proudly partnered with the council these past 28 years in providing the highest level of academic support and enrichments to the youth of our city, many of whom are children of color in low-income neighborhoods. Please fight for our funding of 1 million dollars so that we can continue this partnership and continue to

serve the youth of our communities. Thank you very much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you for your testimony and your work on behalf of New York Edge. Thank you, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Scott Daly.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SCOTT DALY: Good evening, Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, and all council members who have had the staying power to remain on all day up until this hour. My name is Scott Daly and I am the senior director of the [inaudible] programs for the New York Junior Tennis and Learning. We are the nation's largest free scholastic tennis program. NYJTL is seeking a continuation of the $800,000 allocation under this council's physical education and fitness initiative. These funds will enable us to continue to provide safe haven and safe sport and physical activity for children in every borough, in every council district in the City of New York. Tennis, as the governor recently acknowledged, is one of the few outdoor sports that are low risk, we can, and as we continue to navigate COVID-19. Due to the very nature of the sport of tennis NYJTL is uniquely

positioned due to our experience and our history to provide these youngsters with an outlet to relieve the stress and anxiety while still maintaining the social distancing required. Ah, kids who have been locked up and inside for all these months will need to resocialize. They need much-needed exercise. We have to allow the kids to be kids. This cannot be done without your support. Our community tennis program is easily adapted to the six-foot requirement. In anticipation of this we have already programmed in our new models for tennis this summer, that every location will have two additional staff members. In 2008 we got cut by one-third. Another cut would be detrimental, disaster to the safe haven and character development that we [inaudible] our mission. Through the community [inaudible] program we service over 85,000 young people during the year.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

SCOTT DALY: The overwhelming majority of these people, black, Latino, and Asian, about 25% of our population, comes from each of these demographics. Over 70% [inaudible] 10 years old and younger. We must give them this opportunity. We are not unmindful that the city is facing significant

financial challenges. We urge you that during this upcoming budget that it not be balanced on the backs of our city's youth and all other CBOs which serve them. On behalf of all the youngsters and, and parents annually served by NYJTL, I want to personally thank you for the council's commitment to the youth of our city and for your continued and sustained support of NYJTL. Thanks, everybody.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Scott, and thank you for all of your work on behalf of NYJTL and our youth. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rachel Citron.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

RACHEL CINTRON: Good evening. Um, I'm Janice Holden, chief development officer for Row New York, testifying on behalf of Rachel. Um, I just want to quickly acknowledge how incredibly heartening the chairs' and committee members' continued attention to our testimony is. I really, um, it means a lot and it's really moving, actually. Um, like the other organizations testifying here, many of our youth served through the city funding, um, that we get come from communities throughout the five boroughs with some of the most significant

opportunity gaps. Row New York combines the discipline of competitive rowing with rigorous academic programming and social work services. Typically our student athletes attend programming six days a week at one of our boat houses in either Queens, Manhattan, or, ah, Brooklyn. Like other youth-serving organizations we shifted to virtual tutoring and college advising sessions with workouts, academic workshops, and, most importantly, additional hours for social work services and one-on-one counseling. When New York Stated issued stay-at-home orders we immediately provided laptops and wireless hot spots for the students who needed them to both participate in online learning and join our virtual programming. We dropped off sterilized rowing machines to several of the rowers' homes so they could maintain their workouts, an important mental health outlet for the young people we serve. Many of our students' families are facing severe food and housing insecurity [inaudible]. We've provided them with emergency aid while we identify new sources of support to sustain our program. Specifically, we've assisted with rent payments, paid for weekly grocery store, provided additional Chromebooks for

participants' siblings and other family members so they could continue to learn at home. For a number of our young people Row New York has been their primary active and mental health support [inaudible] their families' basic needs. While some might think of our program as simply a rowing or college prep program, in this crisis we've become an essential safety net for many of our families in the hardest hit neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn. On behalf of the young people we serve, I want to express my gratitude for the support City Council has provided, which has resulted in so many transformative...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

RACHEL CINTRON: ...experiences for the students enrolled in our program. We need your help to ensure that our programs remain available to the kids who need them most. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Janice. Thank you for testimony and your advocacy. Thank you on, on behalf on Rachel, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be Emily Ramos, Magdelena Barbosa, Charlene Obernower, Liliana Polo McKenna, and Carolyn Yaso.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Emily Ramos.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

EMILY RAMOS: Thank you. Um, hi, my name is Emily Marie Ramos Rodriguez. I am a worker-owner of [inaudible] marijuana worker cooperative. I am also an elected member of [inaudible] Advocacy Council, um, with [inaudible] network of worker cooperatives and I'm here to advocate, um, for something that I think City Council should, um, invest [inaudible] today moving forward. Um, I definitely think we should in marijuana worker cooperatives. Marijuana has been an essential medicine in many [inaudible]. Um, marijuana is medicine as both studies in Canada and [inaudible] marijuana combat the coronavirus, um, and the federal banking legislation for COVID-19 [inaudible], um, marijuana banking, including Massachusetts [inaudible]. Um, if we legalize marijuana using the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act, 50% of the tax revenue would go into communities most impacted, which are also many of the communities most impacted by the coronavirus [inaudible], 25% into the city's education department, which is [inaudible], and 25%

to drug treatment [inaudible] and education programs, which is also, um, a concern during this time. Um, we [inaudible] to legalize home growing for medical applications, um, and we need to be thinking about money in the budget, um, for legalizing marijuana, which is a human right, medicine, um, access, and provides safety for people to grow in their own homes. We need to invest in the worker cooperative business development initiative because worker cooperatives are essential. Um, the current organizing mutual aid funds, funds for immigrant workers who have [inaudible] federal relief packages offer some online programming, um, to the community and provides [inaudible] to vulnerable communities. Um, they are also pivoting on a lot of programming online, um, classes on yoga, healing with herbs, cooking, growing [inaudible], business development, [inaudible] training. Um, they are also providing assistance [inaudible] applying for federal relief grants and loans. Um, they can also assist...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

EMILY RAMOS: ...[inaudible] assistance. , um, and help provide an energetic [inaudible] a lot of the issues we're facing right now with school,

jobs, housing, and housing insecurity, and food investment housing cooperatives [inaudible] cooperatives and just worker cooperatives, and think about investment in [inaudible] for the community. Um, also, you judge a society by how we treat those incarcerated [inaudible] outsiders. It shows [inaudible] what we can't [inaudible] ourselves so we'd rather [inaudible] lock it up, throw away the keys so we don't have to [inaudible]. We need to let our people go. Let [inaudible] to divest from prisons, corrections, and the NYPD and invest that money into our communities. [inaudible] programs [inaudible] from local farms, investing local farmers, ah, to send aid to folks in prison. Um, we need to turn community members, community organizations, and farmers, our children, and de-escalation and divest from the NYPD. That is where we can find the money to invest in all of this programming to invest in universal income for people who are faced with financial and job insecurity. We can find the money to invest in parks. Um, and community [inaudible], community organizations, education, arts, summer programs, summer youth extracurricular activities, community programs,

ethnic and cultural studies using [inaudible], financial, [inaudible] emotional support for our families and our teachers, free mental health services, um, and on a state level we support Medicare for all. We really need to invest in the health in our community, invest in businesses, invest in intergenerational wealth, and really cut the, the supply chain so that we are controlling the supply chain so in the future if there's food shortages we don't have to worry about that because we're growing our own food and we own our grocery, um, markets. If we know there's a pandemic coming we can order more food so that there are not shortages in stuff because we control that. We do work with local farmers so that we're making sure we're putting money into local farmers' market so that they can provide us with food and [inaudible] coronavirus right now a healthy immune system, um, and investing the marijuana industry, because that's also where we can find money to help these communities who are most vulnerable during this time. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Emily. Thanks for your work and your advocacy. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Magdelena Barbosa.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MAGDELENA BARBOSA: Good evening. Ah, my name is Magdelena Barbosa. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening. I'm a managing attorney at Catholic Migration Services. We are an affiliated agency of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens and we provide free legal services to more than 3000 low-income New Yorkers each year. I'm submitting this testimony this evening in support of the renewal of the low-wage worker initiative funding. Now more than ever there is a tremendous need for the city to continue to support free employment legal services for the city's most vulnerable workers, including low wage and immigrant workers. The low-wage worker initiative has allowed organizations like Catholic Migration Services to represent workers who have been denied their earned wages by unscrupulous employers or need assistance obtaining work-related benefits through government programs. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of millions of workers, including thousands of immigrant workers throughout New York City. Within the last two months the attorneys on our team have responded to calls from hundreds of

immigrants who have lost their employment, fear for their health and safety on the job, and who have become sick or who have balanced the demands of working while caring for sick family members or children whose schools have closed. Our team has counseled essential workers such as restaurant delivery workers and home health aides on their rights on their rights to obtain paid sick time and take paid time off to care for their family members. Our attorneys have screened and counseled workers about their eligibility for unemployment insurance, including workers now covered by the expanded unemployment insurance program as a result of recent federal legislation. The loss of funding of the low-wage worker initiative would take vital services away from low-wage and immigrant workers in New York City just when they need it the most. While we appreciate the constraints of the city's budget...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MAGDELENA BARBOSA: ...[inaudible] of unprecedented economic turmoil, an investment in legal services for low-wage workers will keep workers healthy and improve their ability to pay for basic necessities, such as rent and food. Catholic

Migration Services calls on the city to fully renew the low-wage worker initiative and to preserve this critical funding stream for years to come. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, Magdelena, to you and your team. Thank you for your work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Charlene Obernower.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CHARLENE OBERNOWER: Hi, good evening everyone. My name is Charlene Obernower. I'm the executive director of the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, or NYCOSH. Um, what we do is protect workers' health and safety on the job and we work to, um, do advocacy for workers in all industry, and right now I'm testifying in support of the New York Healthy Nail Salon School and our school is, um, has been one of the primary ways in which workers themselves are getting training that they need on the job, um, in order to be licensed manicurists. So we have trained over 500 workers who have been able to get their nail salon licenses and right now a lot of nail salon workers are out of work. The nail salons are closed and some of these

workers are experiencing the most financial hardships they've ever had in their lives. And what our program aims to do is not only support workers through the school, but also support them as they have, um, issues that we need, that they need help with. For example, we've been doing education and outreach to support workers as they struggle with understanding, ah, the barriers that are created for them due to COVID-19. And we continue to do this level of outreach through the low-wage worker initiative that was mentioned by the previous speaker. So we'd like to advocate for a continuation of funding for our school, as well as a continuation of funding for the initiative. This is critical for workers now, and the thing that's really important here for our program is that this, this set of workers, nail salon workers in particular, are disadvantaged now more than ever and they need the support of the school more than ever. They need to have their licenses. They need to be able to work knowing health and safety regulations on the job, and they need to do so with the protection of the law. So that's why we're here advocating for the protection of this, for the protection of the workers

and for the continuation of funding for the school. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Charlene. Thank you for your testimony and your advocacy. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Liliana Polo McKenna.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

LILIANA POLO MCKENNA: Good evening, all. Um, thank you for sticking with us. Um, my name is Liliana Polo McKenna and I'm the chief executive officer at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow. Thank you to the members of the council for the opportunity to speak tonight and for your consistent support of OBT'S programs. I also have to call out Council Member Menchaca for bringing together Sunset Park CBOs over the past weeks to really understand what's happening on the ground. Um, we appreciate you. Um, I'm here to discuss OBT's proposed programmatic response in light of the current crisis and the need for education and work force training in any recovery effort. OBT's programs serve as a bridge to economic opportunity for thousands of youth, individuals, and families in underserved communities with programming that ranges from high

school equivalency to ESOL courses, to industry-certified training programs in technology, health care, and construction for high school graduates. COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on low-income black and brown communities, the very communities that organizations like OBT have served for decades. In this context, job training and education is a critical stopgap to disproportionate economic strain and challenges. Coming out of this, ah, we're particularly concerned about opportunities for 17 to 24 year olds in immigrant communities in a post-COVID economy. There are currently over 900,000 unemployment New Yorkers with those numbers increasing daily. In New York City, while we've seen the number of out of school and out of work decrease over the past 10 years, this crisis threatens to undo the progress we've made. We've identified three prior areas that require the city's support. The first is expanding sector-based advanced programs in high-growth sectors. This is critical for those with a high school diploma and little to no college experience. The second is digital literacy and basic tech skills, which are essential for all workers. This crisis has highlighted the digital divide. We

need citywide broadband access and through localized efforts ensuring that ESOL and adult literacy, high school equivalency classes continue and have the resources to include digital literacy. Finally, training and retraining...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

LILIANA POLO MCKENNA: ...must be available for unemployment and underemployed New Yorkers through programs like Jobs to Build On for CWE. I appreciate the challenge that you all have ahead. Um, but deep cuts to the organizations and the people that are helping New Yorkers weather through this crisis and are most affected by this crisis is not only short-sighted, it's, it's cruel. It's our hope that the City Council and the administration demonstrates its values in a budget that places opportunity and access for youth, immigrants, and the most vulnerable at the center. Thank you all for your time [inaudible].

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Liliana for your work on behalf of OBT. Thank you so much. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Carolyn Yoso.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CAROLYN YOSO: Good evening everyone. Um, my name is Carolyn Yoso and I'm the director of community and government affairs at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak today and for your leadership during this crisis. I am here because workforce development is an essential element of an equitable economic recovery. Um, I really appreciate, ah, Liliana's testimony and will use my time to underscore her points. We serve young people and adults who face systemic barriers to economic stability. Our participants often struggle with familial poverty, health and mental health issues, and food insecurity. Many are from immigrant, black and brown communities and face the structural racism that those identities engender. Our mission has always been to mitigate the inherent inequity in our economy through supportive and comprehensive programming. Before COVID-19 this work was challenging. Now this work is all the more urgent. With increased competition for jobs, the young people that we work with will be at a significant disadvantage in securing family-sustaining employment. Job training, education programs, and

2 employment placement services are and will continue
3 to be absolutely essential resources to giving our
4 participants a leg up in the economy we're facing.
5 Further, we are embedded trusted resources in
6 communities with relationships with business. This
7 combination makes us invaluable assets to ensuring
8 economic recovery reaches those who need it most.
9 For the coming year our discretionary requests are
10 focused in three areas - employable skills through
11 sector-based advanced training, building digital
12 literacy into adult literacy and ESOL programs, and
13 cultivating hyper local employer work force
14 development and government ecosystems. As we
15 determine the best path forward it would be
16 devastating to leave young people and adults
17 struggling with language access and the digital
18 divide behind. The programs we are proud to provide
19 will be lifelines to our community members. As a
20 progressive city I hope that you will pass a budget
21 that places the needs of the most vulnerable in the
22 center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.
23 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Carolyn,
24 for your work on behalf of OBT. We appreciate you so
25 much. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call our next panel, which will be Tito Siva, Ailene Byler Zuckerman, Lidia Gualpa, Osman Ahmed, Nadia Marin Malina, and Brian Romero.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

TITO SIVA: Good evening. My name is Tito Siva. I am the supervising attorney from the Workers' Right Practice and [inaudible] Justice. Ah, I'm here before you in this moment of health and economic crisis as advocates for low-wage workers, many of whom are essential workers performing essential services on the front lines. On their behalf we impress upon this body that in this crisis the advocacy for low-wage workers is itself an essential service and essential function that must continue to be funded through the low-wage worker initiative. Failure to renew this funding will have a devastating impact on low-wage workers we represent and seek to represent. Leaving workers without representation on issues such as the fight for unemployment benefits wrongfully denied, sick and emergency sick leave, for health and safety of the workplace, while fighting against wage [inaudible] discrimination and retaliation during this critical

time. We at Take Root Justice, we've been diligently working to support our clients and partner groups, um, at this time when legal rights and workplace protections can [inaudible] make a life or death difference. We have expanded our representation to include workers whose applications for unemployment benefits have been denied through COVID-19, as well as increased focus on emergency sick leave cases. We have also provided and are continuing to develop Know Your Rights trainings for organizers and workers on new federal and stage legislations, as well as providing guidance on health and safety issues. Our work to hold exploitative employers accountable for [inaudible] violations and discriminatory practices still continue. Ah, since January 2020 we've obtained over $450,000 in settlements from employers. So we want to impress upon this body that, ah, we're mindful of the financial considerations, but, ah, this funding must be continued. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, Tito, on behalf of Take Root Justice. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Aileen Byler Zuckerman.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

AILENE BYER ZUCKERMAN: Hi, good evening, everyone. My name is Ailene Byer. I work with Worker Justice Project and this night I would like to bring light to testimony that was put to, ah, forward by one of our members and day laborers. His name is Aran Garcia Regis and these are his words. "My name is Aran Garcia Regis and I'm from Monterrey, Mexico. I am a single father of two and I have a beautiful family. I've been in this country since the year 2000 and I've had many jobs in construction. My profession and passion is painting. It is my specialty and I'm always eager to grow and learn more as a worker. I am active member of Worker Justice Project, where I've been continually given the tools to organize, learning skills, and prepare for a better future for myself and my children. Right now as I struggle to survive without a job and no income during the pandemic the Worker Justice Project is supporting me and my colleagues in forming a painter's cooperative so I and other workers have the opportunities to create our own jobs. Worker-owned

cooperatives can change lives. The immigration community faces a tremendous amount of exploitation in the workplace, unfair wages, exploitative hours, dangerous work, and even employer abuse. Worker-owned cooperatives offer us economic autonomy and an opportunity to generate sustainable jobs. Cooperative models offer us a path to professional development, leadership in our community, and an opportunity to not only improve the quality of an individual's life, but to also contribute to an entire community. Worker Justice Project needs your support for our community and our families so we can successfully survive this pandemic and ultimately thrive in economic stability. I hope you understand and hear our fundamental needs as workers and parents. We're counting on your continued support and thank you very much for your time and attention." Thank you for letting me speak his words.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Oh, thank you so much for sharing that. We appreciate your advocacy on behalf our worker cooperatives. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lidia Gualpa.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

LIDIA GUALPA: Um, my name is Lidia Gualpa, executive director of the Worker Justice Project, a Brooklyn-based workers' center, ah, with a base of 2700 members, mostly day laborers, domestic workers, and other essential workers who are keeping the lights on in New York City during the crisis. Jose Canales, [inaudible] and day laborer, was not able to testify but encouraged to read his, our written testimony along with mine. Thank you Council Member Vanessa Gibson, Carlos Menchaca, Daniel Dromm for the opportunity to testify about the importance of keeping day laborer centers open across New York City under the day laborer work force initiative. This global pandemic has hit us all hard, but the recent data clearly indicates that it's mostly Latino immigrant undocumented workers and their families who are suffering the most. They're dying at the highest rate and even in a deep systemic racial inequality that has left them without access to health care [inaudible] and access to jobs and financial security. At Worker Justice Project we have been on the front lines since day one providing direct essential services, such as cash assistance, food pantry, meals, face masks, even before the city

2 started responding to this need while also fighting
3 to protect workers who are putting their lives on the
4 line every day to keep our city running. We have
5 been responding to the frustration of workers who are
6 struggling to remain safe, healthy, and paid while
7 distributing over 2000 face masks to day laborers.
8 We have been also providing legal and organizing
9 supports to over 2000 [inaudible] who are being
10 denied basic [inaudible] safe work places because
11 employers are prioritizing profit over workers'
12 health. We are, we have expanded our emergency
13 response work beyond our capacity to respond to the
14 current crisis. Now more than ever Worker Justice
15 Project and day laborer centers across the city needs
16 to stay open and fully funded. We urge New York City
17 Council to allocate 4.6 million to day laborers. We
18 are the only initiative on the front line, um,
19 serving day laborers and their families in this
20 crisis that hits, um, in every crisis that hits our
21 city, whether it's 9/11, Hurricane Sandy, and now
22 coronavirus, it's day laborers who become the first
23 responders. And it is day laborer centers who become
24 emergency respond centers. It is New York City's
25 duty and responsibility...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

LIDIA GUALPA: ...to protect day laborers who are also parents, um, to many of the childrens, ah, in many of our New York City public schools. We need to protect day laborers now more than ever. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you for your work and your advocacy on behalf of day laborers. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [inaudible] Lidia too. I, I saw you hear early this morning, Lidia, and I can't believe you've stayed with us all this time. Thank you for your very valuable testimony.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And it's always good to see you, always good to see you. Thank you, Lidia.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Nadia Marin Malina.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

NADIA MARIN MALINA: Good evening, um, and thank you so much for the opportunity to give testimony on behalf of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, NDLON, and support of the New York City Day Laborer Work Force Initiative. Um, the

Day Laborer Work Force Initiative funds six day laborer centers in all five boroughs and as was mentioned, New York City's day laborer centers are doing more than ever. They're risking their own health responding to the critical need for health access, food, personal protective equipment, and more. But if New York City wants an equitable recovery from this crisis we need the day laborer centers to continue their work, for three reasons that I'm gonna give. First is an emergency resource for immigrant workers to look for jobs. Many workers find their first job in the United States at a day laborer corner until they find more steady employment. When the economy collapses many workers then go back to the day labor corners or centers and indeed we're finding nationwide that the numbers of workers on the corners are now growing. Second, at setting standards for decent jobs. Right now employers are looking to hire workers for sanitation and cleaning work, for example. Day labor centers ensure that these jobs are good jobs, setting wages and ensuring decent health and safety conditions. And last, challenging the increase in exploitation. In a crisis there are employers that will take

advantage of workers' need and desperation, and government agencies like OSHA reduce their enforcement in these times, as was mentioned before after Hurricane Sandy, 9/11, and California after wildfires, after Hurricane Katrina. So it shouldn't be a surprise that workers are facing exploitation after coronavirus, as was revealed recently with the cleaning workers on the subway. Um, day labor centers proactively prevent and address this exploitation through their work. Day labor centers are showing every day that despite the dehumanizing drum beat of racist and anti-immigrant policies at the federal level they are organizing for justice. They're not afraid and they know that they have always been essential workers. Please...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

NADIA MARIN MALINA: ...[inaudible] the vital and essential work New York City's day labor centers and the thousands of day laborers in New York City by continuing the day laborer work force initiative. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Osman Ahmed.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will start now.

OSMAN AHMED: My name is Osman Ahmed. I am a city policy analyst with the Federation of Policy [inaudible] Agencies, also known, named FPWA. I want to start off by thanking the members of City Council who have stuck with us all day, City Council members Grodenchik, Adams, and that's about it on my screen right now. I really want to thank, um, Chair Gibson, ah, folks from council central staff who have been running this show all day really well, and all the Sergeant at Arms keeping us on task. But a special shout out goes to Council Member Menchaca who has been an incredible champion of marginalized communities and immigrant workers in the city, and that's what I'm here to testify about. And finally, um, my council member, Council Member Dromm, ah, for being such a gracious and attentive chair throughout this really long hearing. So thank you so very much. I'm here to talk about, um, the day work force initiative and the access health initiative on behalf of FPWA and our members, and, um, really what I wanted to stress is, as you've heard all day today from all of the people that testified how incredibly necessary these initiatives and this funding are. City Council and the city cannot take away funding

from the most marginalized communities, the most impacted communities, and the communities on the front lines right when we need that funding the most. Ah, and therefore I urge City Council not to take a dollar away from discretionary funded initiatives that usually fund small grassroots organizations that have trusted ties in the communities, that are doing programming that really gets to the root of the programs that we're seeing right now, and that are supporting some of the most marginalized members of our New York community. And therefore I'm urging City Council to invest in the Day Laborer Work Force Initiative. As my colleagues, um, have talked about in the past, this initiative is supporting some of the most vulnerable workers out there and I...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

OSMAN AHMED: ...urge the City Council [inaudible], um, in the next fiscal year. Thank you so very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Brian Romero.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

BRIAN ROMERO: Thank you, Council Speaker Johnson, Council Members Dromm, Gibson, Menchaca, Adams, Holden, and Grodenchik for sticking with us.

My name is Brian Romero and I'm a policy associate at GMHC. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic GMCH has transitioned some of our programming and we are continuously thinking of creating, creative ways to provide relief to our clients. The needs for meals was not news to us, as we know that 55% of New Yorkers living with HIV are already food insecure. We have been able to serve over 700 clients and deliver over 20,000 meals at this point. Clients who access our food and nutrition services are people of color, over the age 50, they live below the federal poverty level, and many are homeless or unstablely housed. We have made wellness calls to nearly 6000 clients and made over 800 client referrals for advocacy, food, legal, or [inaudible] programs. We ask that discretionary funding for nonprofits not be cut. Discretionary funding, which only counts for 0.42% of the city budget, is currently supporting CBOs at the poor communities most severely impacted by COVID-19. Instead of cutting the funding, we ask that the council maintain this low-cost budget line with a huge impact for underserved communities. We support what other nonprofits are calling for, including allowing restricted funding to be used for

general operating support, eliminating the hearings requirement for fiscal year 20 contract registration, no retroactive cuts, and at least two weeks' planning time if a program must be cut. Specifically, we urge the council to maintain funding for the ending the epidemic initiative, trans equity initiative, communities of color nonprofit stabilization fund, and reproductive and sexual health services. Finally, we ask that the council maintain the backfill for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to make whole the state Article 6 reimbursement rate reduction that was enacted in the state fiscal year 2020 budget. This funding is crucial for nonprofits who provide services for immigrant health, health outreach, HIV/AIDS, child and maternal health, viral hepatitis, and more. I thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Brian, on behalf of GMHC. We appreciate it. We appreciate. Thank you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thanks, Brian.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, who will be Marisa DeDominicis, Robert Fanuzzi, Elsa Higby, Michelle Fox, Beth Goldman, Ron

Rasmussen, Jeanette Zelhof, and Marcia Levy. Marisa...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts, your time starts now.

MARISA DEDOMINICIS: Good evening, Chair Vanessa Gibson and Daniel Dromm. Thank you, council, for this opportunity to speak. I'm Marisa DeDominicis and I'm cofounder of Earth Matter NY. We're a nonprofit located on Governors Island. Our mission is that we see that there is one soil, one air, and one water all commonly held and stewarded by one people, the nurturance of which is critical to our verdant world. We see that organic waste should not be part of modern landfills because the waste of any process, [inaudible] foods or other processes, we see the transportation of waste far beyond the source unnecessarily. This spoils soil, air, and water. And we see that society needs to alter the way that waste is treated as part of an integrated long-term solution to food, climate, and energy issues. We see that the power to manifest global change lies within each one of us and that challenge to take action rests on our shoulders. And I have to say that tonight I was so inspired. I've been here since 10

in the morning and, um, it's one of, one of the best days in my life to see so many committed people out there in New York doing this work. But on April 2, Earth Matter, like everyone in else in New York was affected and our staff knows that. We went from having eight people that were staff to two. We're requesting that restoration of funding to our New York City Community Composting Coalition for this next fiscal year will provide our passionate and effective members, seven NYC compost project programs, and grow New York City's recycling outreach programs the means to build a bridge that's needed now over the gap created because of the suspension of the curbside. The bridge...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARISA DEDOMINICIS: ...[inaudible] for 4.4, 6.4 million will ensure success of the larger proposed compost initiatives that the council members have been proposing in bills. Thank you, members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for the compost caucus, and all the members of the City Council for all the work that you've been doing and, ah, wishing you all health and safety in this difficult time.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Marisa. Thanks for your advocacy and thanks for being with us all this time. We appreciate.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Marisa, thanks for sticking around.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [laughs].

MARISA DEDOMINICIS: Thanks.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Robert Fanuzzi.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

ROBERT FANUZZI: Thank you, ah, Speaker Johnson, Chairs Dromm, [inaudible], and Chair Gibson, and to all the panelists who have testified today. I hope we learn from them and seize this opportunity to amend a budget that disproportionately penalizes grants for programs that serve our vulnerable communities. I'm president of Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, a leading voice in the Bronx for sound environmental policy as an inherent human right. The ACQ calls upon the City Council to restore the 3.5 million dollars for community composting and the NYC Compost Project as part of a renewed commitment to community health for Bronxites. Before this crisis, Bronxites suffered the highest asthma rates in the US and wide disparities of access

to green space. As Bronxites struggle to recover from our health crisis, they deserve policies that address underlying community health conditions. The disproportionate cuts in the mayor's executive budget will walk back the city from any lessons that can be learned from COVID-19. NYC Compost Project, a city contractor since 1993, makes our city healthier. Its tiny subsidy has a multiplier effect so large that cutting it will multiple negative effects on our most vulnerable communities while returning negligible value to the city's overall fiscal picture. NYC Compost Project's decentralized community-based composting program educates citizens to keep and process organic waste on site, reducing hauling costs and avoiding air pollution of compost miles, those extra miles we travel to centralize food drop-off locations. NYC Compost Project serves over 200 community-based organization in the Bronx alone, helping them sustain a network of community gardens that provide essential health benefits to underserved groups. Especially now, DPR cannot maintain and create all the green spaces...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ROBERT FANUZZI: Community composting helps vulnerable New Yorkers reclaim their own green space, clean the air, and remove dangerous toxins from our urban soil. It is an indispensable leak in a closed loop organic recycling system that puts on the path towards environmental sustainability. You cannot find a simpler, more cost-effective solution than this successful public health grassroots partnership. BCQ holds the public spending is environmental health spending and calls up on the City Council to restore this valueless cut. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much for your work on behalf of BCEQ and the Bronx. We appreciate you. Thank you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thanks, Robert.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Elsa Higby.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

ELSA HIGBY: Chair Dromm, Vice Chair Gibson, and members of the committee, I am testifying on behalf of Queens Botanical Garden for the New York City Compost Project, which we have hosted for the last 26 years. Annually, the New York City Compost Project at seven host sites supports 287 community

composting sites and 106 food scrap drop-off sites, trains 85 master composters, engages 7704 volunteers, diverts 4.6 million pounds of food scraps, distributes 1.1 million pounds of compost, and donates 8000 pounds of produce, while running workshops all over the city. Through these activities the compost project has been able to engage anyone who wants to learn for free in the experiencing of transforming wasted, our collective failure, into compost and irrefutable success. At Queens Botanical Garden the compost project operates a vegetable farm and a composting site, accepting residential organics collected by Grow NYC. Both of these physical operations complement each other to leverage other compost project programming and public engagement in food scrap recycling. Their coexistence demonstrates the closed loop system of recycling organizing waste to make compost that feeds soils that produce crops all over New York City. Our relationship with the New York City Compost Project has been mutually beneficial. The project benefits from our land, infrastructure, visibility, and community relationships. The garden benefits from the project's skilled and committed staff, public

engagement, and increases our capacity to work with summer youth employment and [inaudible] providing the compost project extended reach. We encourage you to restore funding to the New York City Compost Project and Grow NYC zero waste programming. The opportunity at hand to educate new recyclers has never been greater due to the simple fact that people will be home for the next year. This is the time to increase the capacity...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ELSA HIGBY: ...of this program and maximize their success. We fear that failing to do so will cost our city more than the short-term savings these cuts will provide and will hamper our resiliency in the face of climate change and future pandemics. Thank you all for making the public hearing possible. I'm humbled and honored to have had this opportunity to witness this truly inspiring moment in history.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you for your work on behalf of Queens Botanical Garden. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Michelle Fox.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

MICHELLE FOX: Thank you all for listening to us all day and the work you are doing, really appreciate it. Please don't cut the residential compost, um, [laughs] sorry. Food and yard rubbish make up one-third of the residential waste stream. Left to rot in landfills, food waste emits methane. This is the most powerful greenhouse gas. New York made a positive step forward with the city's successful residential compost program. But with less than 10 years that we have to stop climate catastrophe now is not the time to take two steps back. Instead of collapsing the city's compost program, we need to expand it and make residential compost mandatory. Ending the compost program sends a clear message to the people of New York that environmental justice is not essential and that we can continue to kick the can down the road. I have a reusable bag from the DSNY that says "zero waste to landfills by 2030." I ask you to stand by city's own goals and keep our great compost program in place. This issue is bigger than the 2021 budget. This is our legacy. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much, and I agree with you. Thank you so much, thank you, Michelle. [laughs]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Beth Goldman.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

BETH GOLDMAN: Thank you, ah, thank you, Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, council members, and staff for listening to us all day. Ah, no one can doubt, um, your commitment to and concern about the people of the city and you are really fantastic. My name is Beth Goldman and I'm the president and attorney in charge of the New York Legal Assistance Group, also known as NYLAG. New York is like no other city and we know that in so many ways. But one of the very special ways in which it's unique is its commitment to providing legal services to those who could not otherwise afford an attorney when facing a crisis. And this crisis, the pandemic, ah, is having an impact on those experiencing poverty in an unprecedented way. I want to take my two minutes to talk about what's happening right now and what we expect to happen in the future. Right now, NYLAG staff is, may not be in our offices, but we are continuing to provide the services we always have,

um, and in particular there are areas where we are very active, like housing. Ah, people think the courts are closed, but the reality is that emergencies are happening and we are there, so that when somebody, one of our clients, was locked out of his apartment we, one of our lawyers had a hearing, ah, and a judge and two witnesses, and at the end of the hearing the judge ordered that the, the person be restored to their home, um, during this pandemic, um, and that's just one example, obviously. Same thing on the immigration front. I know you've heard from an earlier panel about the fact that immigration, ah, enforcement is still going on and people are being detained and deported. We are out there advocating for them. We have written habeas actions to get people out of detention and continuing our struggle, all of this with the funding that the City Council and this administration provide. We've also operated a COVID-19 hotline where we are taking calls and responding to a variety of needs that we are hearing, everything from unemployment insurance to employment issues to, ah, domestic violence, on and on and on.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

BETH GOLDMAN: I want to, just one sentence, which is the future is going to be even more burdensome as we, once the courts open and the floodgates open with all of the, the, um, clients we expect to see. This is the time to support the services. Thank you so much for everything you do for she.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Beth, on behalf of NYLAG, we appreciate your work. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ron Rasmussen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now. You're unmuted sir, go ahead. Mr. Rasmussen, you are unmuted. You can speak.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Is he here?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: He's here, I just think he's having issues hearing us.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: So he doesn't know that he's unmuted.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We can move to the next panelist, who will be Jeanette Zelhof.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

JEANETTE ZELHOF: Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK, we can hear you.

JEANETTE ZELHOF: OK, great, thank you. Good evening, everybody. My name is Jeanette Zelhof. I'm the executive director of Mobilization for Justice, one of five members of the legal services for the Working Poor Coalition, that includes CAMBA Legal Services, [inaudible] Conservation Coordinators, the Manhattan Improvement Corporation, and Take Root Justice. The coalition was created 16 years ago with support from the City Council to address the civil legal needs of working poor New Yorkers whose income is slightly highest than the poorest New Yorkers, thus rendering them ineligible for free civil legal services. These are the hard-working New Yorkers who serve the city yet barely make ends meet. They are the home care workers who care for our sick and elderly. They are the nannies who care for our children. They are the taxi drivers and other essential low-wage workers who keep the city running. They are also one legal problem as well as, such as facing a bank access seizure for debt that is not theirs, being harassed by a landlord because of their immigrant status, not getting paid the wages they are due, from spiraling downward and

2 joining the ranks of the officially poor. The COVID-
3 19 crisis is a further stressor. These are workers
4 who do not have the luxury of working from home and
5 who expose themselves daily using public
6 transportation to get to their jobs, where they are
7 also exposed. During this COVID-19 pandemic, excuse
8 me, of the many issues with which we help our
9 clients, from immigration to employment to housing to
10 benefits, debt collection has merged, has emerged as
11 an urgent legal problem. As we know, communities of
12 color and immigrant communities already face severe
13 health and economic disparities. They are also the
14 communities for which debt buyers have systemically
15 extracted wealth and where calls from abusive debt
16 collectors are part of everyday life. I will share
17 with you a couple of examples of request for service
18 we in the Legal Services for the Working Poor
19 Coalition...
20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
21 JEANETTE ZELHOF: OK, I'll you one story.
22 This is [inaudible]. I used to be homeless. Now I
23 work as a home health aide and live in affordable
24 housing I got through a lottery. A marshall started
25 garnishing my paycheck in January. I found out it's

2 for an old judgment, but I never got court papers.
3 I'm a victim of identity theft, so I don't even think
4 this is my debt. I went to court to try to stop the
5 wage garnishment, but the [inaudible] court postponed
6 my court date to March and then again to June. The
7 whole time the marshall kept garnishing my wages.
8 I'm worried I'll have to go back to a shelter because
9 of all of this. This is one example of the many
10 clients that call to us for services and we ask that
11 you continue to fund them with the services for the
12 working poor initiative that uniquely serves this
13 population. Thank you so much.
14 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Jeanette.
15 Thanks for your work on behalf of MFJ. Thank you.
16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We're going to circle
17 back to Ron Rasmussen.
18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.
19 RON RASMUSSEN: Thank you Council Members
20 Dromm and Gibson...
21 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Hi, Ron.
22 RON RASMUSSEN: ...and Speaker Johnson.
23 Hi. Thank you Council Members Dromm, Gibson, and
24 Speaker Johnson for this opportunity to testify. My
25 name is Ron Rasmussen and I'm the executive director

of Legal Services NYC. Our staff of nearly 600 advocates and support staff fights poverty and seeks racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers by providing free civil legal services to thousands of families every year. Since mid March, when we closed the doors to our 16 offices throughout the city our staff have worked tirelessly from their homes to provide legal services in the areas that New Yorkers have always needed, and especially in the areas of greatest need right now - cash assistance, food stamps, and unemployment insurance. Our multilingual hotline staff are fielding more than 1400 calls a week from New Yorkers who are desperate for help. Our social workers and development staff [inaudible] buy food or diapers for their kids. In the past four weeks our public benefit advocates have operated nearly 1000 new cases, more than double the number of cases operated during the previous four-week period. Our staff have Zoom educated thousands of constituent service providers and potential clients about public benefits, the newly available unemployment benefits, and how to apply for them. We're helping kids with special needs and survivors of domestic violence. And our immigrant advocates

are fighting in federal court to ensure that non-detained immigrants are not punished because of their inability to comply with filing deadlines. This crisis has highlighted the compound impacts that systemic racism and endemic poverty have the communities we serve. Financial impacts, health impacts, and education impacts have all fallen disproportionately and devastatingly on communities of color. Our clients have been unable to use technologies that are needed to apply for public benefits or access through remote learning classes. At best, many rely on phones with limited minutes and bad connectivity. And as the courts continue to encourage attorneys to use e-filing...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

RON RASMUSSEN: ...[inaudible] as the way to engage with the courts we need to make sure that those without adequate access to technology are denied, are not denied justice. We are now experts at providing the remote services that are needed and we're ready to respond to the tsunami of need that will hit us all when the courts open. But we can't do that without your help and supporting legal services for low-income New Yorkers and our Veterans

Justice Project. This day-long public hearing is a moving testimony to the critical role the council has played to ensure that the rights and needs of all New Yorkers are addressed. We look forward to our continued work together in this moment of our greatest challenge. Thank you all.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thanks, Ron. Thanks for your work on behalf of LSNY. We appreciate it. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Marcia Levy.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARCIA LEVY: Thank you. I think after this long day and at 10:30 at night a joke might be in order. And here it is, my son's favorite from when he was 10 years old. Why don't sharks bite lawyers? Professional courtesy. Now, what we just heard from the lawyers in this room, and I'm gonna pretend I'm in a room, and from the lawyers all day, and I'm glad somebody's laughing, thank you, is that these are not sharks. These are the best advocates in the city. These are people who are fighting on behalf of every single person that you heard testimony from today. Legal services lawyers are the essential legal workers and are providing services to

immigrants, to low-income New Yorkers facing eviction, to veterans, to elderly, to small businesses, to the unemployed. My name is Marcia Levy and I'm the executive director of Volunteers of Legal Service, or VOLS, which you all know well. We've worked with all of you and all of your community organizations to provide those very legal services that I just described. We have rapidly responded and we're doing work in unemployment. We have a hotline, representing hundreds of people since April 1, and a new initiative, the Healthcare and Frontline Workers with DC37, who you heard from this morning, to represent those works who desperately need life planning and power of attorneys so that they can feel at peace as they go in and put their lives on the line. But what I really want to talk to you about in my last minute is the Commercial Lease Assistance Program that we have been a part of with Take Root Justice and also with Brooklyn Legal Aid, Corporation Aid, the Legal Services Corporation Aid, for three years. We heard this morning that's being cut.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

MARCIA LEVY: That's not possible. When we look around us, if we walk outside tonight and we see the shuttered businesses, we'll see them again at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning and also at noon. Please, as you think about this budget, know that on July 1 when that program ends if it's funded those small businesses will not be able to afford the rent. Those small businesses will not be able to lift the shutters and they will not be able to go back to work and put back into our communities the money that they earn so that we will benefit from their hard work. Please make sure that program survives. And thank you so much to all of you because you are our fans, you are our supporters, we work shoulder to shoulder with you to make a difference in New York City, and we love you. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much. We appreciate all of your work. Thank you so much, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, which will be James Dill, Diane Louard-Michel, Justin Lamorte, and Alisa Keel. James Dill.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: James, you there?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Let's move on to Diane Louard-Michel.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: OK.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And then we'll try to, oh, here we go, we have Mr. Dill.

JAMES DILL: OK, ah, thank you so much. Good evening, I'm Jim Dill, executive director of Housing and Services Inc., a non-for-profit developer and operator of permanent supportive housing project. Permanent supportive housing is the most cost-effective and humane approach towards ending chronic homelessness. Ultimately the proposed, ah, HPD supported housing capital budget cuts will not save money, but rather will increase volatile and more expense costs for shelters, emergency rooms, and other stopgap measures. By the governor's executive order, supportive housing construction and operation are essential. The current pandemic underscores their essential nature as congestion shelters and the street homeless populations become probable reservoirs for this contagion, a possible death sentence for the city's most vulnerable. The proposed cuts will also have the unintended consequences of putting not-for-profit housing

developers at a significant competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis for-profit developers, as our own organizations learned sadly this Monday. We had found a seller well motivated to sell land quickly at a good price due to the pandemic, but lost the site to a for-profit developer. Uncertainty about city capital funding was a significant factor in the sellers moving quickly with the for-profit developer. After years of skyrocketing land prices, the pandemic at least offers an opportunity for lower development costs by severely curtailing supportive housing development. The proposed budget cuts would cost the city more as land prices escalate post pandemic. The pandemic has shone a bright light on the inequities suffered by the poor and the vulnerable. Rather than cutting HPD's budgets, now is the right time for the city to reaffirm the supportive housing pipeline for...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

RON RASMUSSEN: ...[inaudible] purposes. HSI thanks the committee for its long hours and giving the people we serve a voice. Supportive housing saves lives. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Diane Louard-Michel.

DIANE LOUARD-MICHEL: Um, I am, um, good evening...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DIANE LOUARD-MICHEL: Yes, good evening. Um, my name is Diane Louard-Michel. I am the executive director of Lantern Community Services. Um, my organization is an affordable supportive housing organization that today has, um, developed 16 different sites, unique sites, across the boroughs that provide safe, stable, affordable housing with a whole bevy of supportive services that are intended to address the disparate impacts of poverty, of, of behavioral and primary health, ah, conditions, chronic conditions that are only exacerbated by the racial and social disparities in access to health care. Um, my organization serves over a thousand people who would otherwise be homeless today. Um, we serve over, and those people, I just want to tell you who they are. They are, ah, fellow New Yorkers. They are brown and black and poor and traumatized and marginalized and in so many ways are trying to claw their way back, not just from being on the streets or being homeless, but to a place where they are living a life that sustains and nourishes them, where they

have adequate access to health care, where they are surrounded by professionals, a community of people who care about their well-being, where they have access to the restorative qualities of arts, culture, fitness, food security. These are the people that I serve and these are the people that I've dedicated my life.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

DIANE LOUARD-MICHEL: So I want to talk to you, OK, I will just say. I want to talk to you. I'm here to support, to talk about the cuts to the HPD budget. Um, we have a project that is at risk, along with many other projects that are in the pipeline. I just want to say that I believe that while I understand the budget, ah, the terrible situation that we're all facing based on our main response to the coronavirus epidemic that not to invest has this triple effect. It creates disinvestment from all the other parties that have amplify and multiply and really leveraged that city capital investment, um, and it also would create a stoppage in the pipeline that will take not just a year or two to fix by resuming the cause, it will really disrupt, um, the ability to provide an outlet

to, to safety and security for people who are most at risk or homeless. And that, that, that disruption will be for years. It will be, be measured not in months but in years.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you.

DIANE LOUARD-MICHEL: So I just want to say that. I want to thank everybody here. This is like my first time watching the marathon, ah, in person, up live and close, and just to see my, to see the commitment, the passion, the dedication of our public leaders, of the people who have come to testify on behalf of the welfare of New York. It's so inspiring. And it's worth, it's been worth hanging in there since 9:30 this morning.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Oh, thank you so much, Diane. Thanks for your work.

DIANE LOUARD-MICHEL: More than welcome, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you.

DIANE LOUARD-MICHEL: And I do know, I know, I know this is tough times, but, really, please, think about...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you.

DIANE LOUARD-MICHEL: ...think about what's going on. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thanks for your testimony, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Justin Lamorte.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

JUSTIN LAMORTE: Good evening. My name is Justin Lamorte and I'm a supervising attorney at Mobilization for Justice. I'm speaking here today about the [inaudible] Harassment and Tenant Protection program, um, also known as HTP. I'm speaking on behalf of the [inaudible] coalition, whose membership consists of 18 legal services organizations who serve New Yorkers across the city. HTP doesn't have as a high as profile other common justice initiatives, but for its small size it has a very large impact upon the tenants of New York. Um, it allows us to act proactively instead of reactively so we can help tenants before that risk of eviction while they still have the most leverage. It also allows us to take affirmative action, whether it's stopping abusive debt collection, um, stopping, or forcing landlords to make repairs, stopping harassment, stopping discrimination, or engaging in

impact litigation whose results will ring across the city and not just for those individual tenants. Now in my testimony, my written testimony, I discuss on how it not only can save the city money, but also create revenue streams, um, and how incredibly important it is to recognize housing as health care and how this HTP program does exactly that. With what little time I have remaining, I just want to talk about some of the tenants that we're serving because of this program. Um, six Chelsea tenants reached out to us. Um, they were the only tenants left in a 48-unit [inaudible] building. Um, and because of this program we were able to represent them. Um, we've sued the landlord, saying he was not making repairs in his warehousing in the hopes of taking affordable housing and turning it into luxury housing and we won. Those tenants now [inaudible] order for the repairs to be made. They also got an order saying the landlord can never turn that housing into luxury housing because of the harassment he engaged against them. Those tenants received $126,000 because of the harassment they went through. Just this money we got a call from a woman in Sunset Park...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

JUSTIN LAMORTE: ...[inaudible]. Um, we have a pregnant woman in, um, Borough Park who had her locks changed, and I could just go on and on. So I just ask the City Council when looking at this moral document that is our budget that you recognize that tenants deserve to live free of harassment and live in safe housing, and HTP exactly does that. And we hope that you continue your support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Justin. Thanks for your advocacy and your testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alisa Keel.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ALISA KEEL: Hi, good evening. Ah, I'm not Alisa Keel. I'm Brenda Tong, deputy executive director for New Destiny Housing Corporation. Thank you to all the council members for hanging in with us, Finance Chair Dromm and Subcommittee Chair Gibson, for persevering and for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of domestic violence survivors seeking affordable housing free from abuse for themselves and their children. As state budget cuts loom and federal support remains uncertain, the cuts to HPD's capital budget will devastate the

city's efforts to address its homelessness crisis. New Destiny owns and operates six service-enriched affordable housing projects with 50% of homes set aside for homeless domestic violence survivors and their children. Four more projects are in the pipeline. Together they represent 456 low-income households. This was made possible by HPD capital funding sources. The pandemic has driven home the lesson that housing is health care. Yet despite the evidence of domestic violence as a major driver for family homelessness, survivors often do not have equitable access to housing resources. The lack of appropriate housing forces survivors to choose between sheltering with their abuser or risk contracting a life-threatening illness in shelter. A safe, affordable home is the first line of defense in protecting vulnerable communities. During this crisis the supportive housing community has adapted rapidly, developing innovative ways to deliver essential services and keep their clients safe. New Destiny's staff supported their clients through applying for unemployment, accessing food resources, and helping parents breach the digital divide so their child could effectively engage in remote

learning. Finally, as we look towards recovery from the pandemic we know that supportive housing development not only addresses a critical need, it also creates jobs. The cuts to capital funding means fewer homes for low-income New Yorkers, many of whom are the essential workers who have kept New York going during...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ALISA KEEL: ...[inaudible] and an even longer road to economic recovery. The city must preserve the capital budget for these critical housing programs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thanks, Alisa.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call the next panel, who will be Alba Ria, Marina Cochran Gutierrez, Lorraina Carocias, and Stephanie Lopez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

ALBA RIA: Good evening. I thank the speaker, Chairs Dromm, Gibson, and Council Member Menchaca, and City Council for holding this hearing. My name is Alba Ria and I'm the executive director of Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights. For almost 40 years NMCIR has been in the forefront

of fighting for immigrant families. We serve over 8000 families a year through our legal department, worker center, and education programs. Today more than ever we are essential for our community's survival. NMCIR is open not only for virtual legal consultations and classes, but we're also going out to the community to deliver food, masks, and cash assistance. Over the past few months, um, and few weeks hundreds of community members have been calling us in dire need. They're hungry, they're sick, they're grieving, and they're scared. At least 50% of our clients either experienced or knew someone who was experiencing domestic violence before this pandemic. And now we have seen an increase in calls for help. Often organizations like NMCIR are the only channels that immigrants feel safely able to access immigrant services. Immigrant workers, who are now risking their lives to save ours, are still with wage theft, discrimination, unsafe working conditions, and exploitation. They are essential and yet they are often excluded. The city's day laborer initiative is critical to allowing worker centers to continue doing the disaster relief that we have been doing, in addition to the work force development,

safety trainings, and wage theft services that we have always been offering. And NMCIR's worker centers are coordinating now weekly food delivery and meals for groceries. When a local restaurant offered to cook 200 meals for us a week we coordinate and mobilized our base and did it within two hours. And when another local restaurant offered to cook meals and prepare grocery store for 50 families it took us 15 minutes to put a list together and an hour to reach out to them to make delivery. We are effective at responding to the needs of our communities because we understand them and we...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ALBA RIA: ...[inaudible]. Our city and country are at a crossroads in funding for the day laborer work initiative, ILY, adult literacy [inaudible] rely on us to continuing providing the support New Yorkers desperately need. I appreciate all your hard work and am eager to work with you, not only to rebuild a fairer New York City, but to eradicate the disparities that long plagued our city before this pandemic. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Marina Cochran Gutierrez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MARINA COCHRAN GUTIERREZ: Hi, good evening everyone. Um, thank you Chairs Dromm, Gibson, Council Members Menchaca, Adams, Grodenchik, Rosenthal, and Speaker Johnson for your time and for real for your sincere commitment to hearing everyone's voices this evening and this afternoon. Um, my name is Marina Cochran Gutierrez and I am the deputy director of the Street Vendor Project. We are a member-led organization that advocates for street vendor rights and we fight to improve working conditions for street vendors citywide. Today I wanted to share the story of one of our members, E, who is a vendor in Corona Plaza in Queens. E and his wife sell flowers every day in the plaza. And he said to me on Monday night after the NYPD arrested his wife because she did not have an ID, after they ticketed him $100 for not having a license. He said what am I supposed to tell my son when he is asking for food when there isn't any? How am I supposed to stay home and not work when I haven't gotten any support from government, not from the mayor, not from

the governor, not from the president, how am I supposed to feed my family? And so tonight I pass this question on to you, council members. How is E or any of the 360,000 undocumented workers and 48,000 undocumented business owners in New York City are supposed to feed their families when they've been excluded from relief at level of government? Does being undocumented make you unqualified to earn an honest living or to receive the help that you deserve, like anyone else? We are asking our City Council to step into their roles as representatives of a sanctuary city on behalf of all immigrant New Yorkers and their communities, and to please pass a budget that secures the well-being of undocumented [inaudible]. While the mayor recently announced a partnership with the Open Society [inaudible] to support 20,000 undocumented New Yorkers, this fund will reach fewer than 3% of the half a million undocumented New Yorkers and their families who have been excluded from all relief. Other states and municipalities across the...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

MARINA COCHRAN GUTIERREZ: ...[inaudible] are feeling the gap created by the federal by

committing significant resources to undocumented residents and if New York City's goal is to equitably provide resources to all New York residents, include E, we are, we are asking and begging our City Council to ensure that there's funding for undocumented New Yorkers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much for sharing that story and for your advocacy on behalf the Street Vendor Project and our street vendors. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lorraine Carocias.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

LORRAINA CAROCIAS: I am Lorraina Carocias. I am an immigrant, a psychologist, a social worker, and an executive director of [inaudible] Organization. The [inaudible] Organization is the [inaudible] labor organization. Like other grassroots organizations we have a small, a small budget, heavily reliant on discretionary funding. There is no [inaudible] for anyone here that these two factors are putting us in the risk of closing our doors and letting communities in extreme need without vital services. I'm here tonight to request your [inaudible] to keep this small city

[inaudible] fully funded. I'm testifying on behalf of all my immigrant community that have been heavily affected in that our reaching out to [inaudible] to find food for their children. Or a funeral home for their loved ones. Or support on navigating [inaudible] during the pandemic and every day. The corona crisis has shown us [inaudible] vulnerablity to crisis, but the deep racial inequality that has long existed in New York City. Ah, the challenges, the challenge we face now is not a lack of determination, but the crisis of funding. With the modest funds, with the modest budgets [inaudible] is taking a heavy, heavy toll on the physical, emotional, and economic health of Brooklyn's vulnerable Latinx community. We have been fundraising to provide emergency financial support to our community members in extreme need. In less than a week we have received 10,000 requests. We don't have enough money...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

LORRAINA CAROCIAS: ...we don't have enough money to cover [inaudible] those requests. We are asking right now that instead of cutting discretionary funding we call the city to find more

impactful [inaudible] while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for underserved communities. And thank you so much for being here and it's almost 11 o'clock, and this is like a lot, a lot [inaudible] why we care for these communities and thank you so much, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, thank you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Stephanie Lopez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

STEPHANIE LOPEZ: I'm Stephanie Lopez. I'm [inaudible] attorney at the [inaudible] Services Center. [inaudible] is a [inaudible] that assists [inaudible] and people between the ages of 12 and 24 access, to access a variety of services, such as housing, GED classes, shop training, and legal services. We represent many young people in New York City in the special immigrant juveniles such as asylum and other human attorney things. We receive City Council funding as part of work in the I Care Collaborative. And that funding is critical to helping us represent immigrant youth in their legal proceedings and ensure that their rights are

2 protected and that they may pursue all avenues in
3 relief of [inaudible]. Under the current federal
4 administration representing youth in immigration
5 court has become exponentially more difficult. With
6 the creation of the family unit cases immigration
7 judges are forced to complete cases within a year,
8 even if immigrants have applications pending or
9 approved with USCMS. We represent a young mother
10 from El Salvador who fled with her son after
11 receiving threats from gang members. The threats
12 continued despite going to the police. So to find
13 safety she made the long journey with her toddler to
14 reunite in the US with her mother in Queens. In New
15 York City she was able to go to school, learn
16 English, and finally was able to obtain the stability
17 and safety she so desperately sought. Over the,
18 although [inaudible] application was approved she is
19 unable to apply for a green card because of her
20 current [inaudible] and now is scheduled for a trial
21 in August. Unable to collect the evidence needed in
22 El Salvador because of COVID-19, her trial
23 [inaudible]. Citing her story as the norm, despite
24 having a clear form of relief, we were forced into
25 trial because the immigrant court refuses to wait for

visas to become current. Legal services providers are the first to engage in more federal litigation, [inaudible] deportation of youth who have a pathway to legal status. Because of COVID-19 the...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

STEPHANIE LOPEZ: ...[inaudible] were essentially closed due to those seeking refugee. Once we open we anticipate a large number of immigrants coming in with [inaudible] representation. But I Care Coalition collectively is fighting to defend 168 unaccompanied minor and adults and we're seeking enhanced funding to continue doing the work. We ask that now more than ever you support our continued fight to thwart this administration's deportation issues and ensure that New York City, the quintessential city of immigrants, [inaudible] this program [inaudible] stand up for immigrants' rights because no one else will. Thank you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Stephanie.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: The, The Door is such an important organization. I'm really proud it's in my district. You guys help countless young people, ah, and I'm really grateful that you took time to

spend all day and all night to testify. We really love The Door...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes we do.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: ...and the number of young people that you help. I'm really, really proud, ah, to represent you all. So thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call our final panel, who will be Joseph Pierre, Rico Noel, Justin Gordeen, Melanie Wilkerson, Chip Eisenhart, and Michelle Neubauer.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Joseph Pierre.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: He's muted. Now he's unmuted. Go ahead, Josh.

JOSH PIERRE: Hi, my name is...

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Hi Josh.

JOSEPH PIERRE: ...Joseph Pierre. Most of you know me as, ah, Josh.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: We do.

JOSEPH PIERRE: I represent the [inaudible] in Brooklyn. Ah, I want to thank Chairs

Dromm, Gibson, Menchaca, and of course Speaker Johnson for the opportunity to speak on behalf of residents of Flatbush on the budget cuts that are coming our way. My neighbors and I are very concerned that instead of supporting communities like ours the proposed budget cuts will, um, have cuts on jobs, education, funding for sanitation services, and very importantly to us, um, and people across the city, um, the development of new affordable housing in ways that will devastate communities like Brooklyn, um, where we have a lot of frontline and essential workers. Um, in the interest of time I'll refer you to my recent op ed published in the *BK Reader*, titled What Proposed Budget Cuts Mean for Flatbush and the 40th Council District, which flags all the concerns we have in Brooklyn. Um, I want to get to, um, the Summer Youth Employment Program because it's very, um, personal to me. Um, I myself am an SYEP alumnus. My first job, um, during high school was at Methodist Hospital [inaudible] because of SYEP. It was a great experience and a resume builder for me as I took my first steps into work force. This is why I was very disappointed to hear that instead of working with communities and

organizations to find safe, viable, remote options the city might be cutting funding for the summer's program. For youth in, um, for young people in, growing up in central Brooklyn, um, who are mainly black and brown and working-class communities like Flatbush, SYEP is a critical step towards economic empowerment. I can tell you firsthand that those paychecks, however small they are, contribute to household spending. They help, um, immigrant parents buy food and pay the electric bill in, and a number of other things. I also want to point out that we are in an evolving job market. Many companies are currently shifting to remote work. There are indications that this will be part of, um, companies' plans moving forward into the future. So as we, um, look at competitive job market...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JOSEPH PIERRE: As we look at a competitive job market with unemployment, um, by not giving kids these, um, opportunities we're actually making them less competitive for the coming job market. Um, I want to let the committee know that we did put up a Save Summer Youth, um, Flatbush are petition in the 40th council district. It's gotten

hundreds of signatures and I plan on submitting them to the council, um, Council Member Mathieu Eugene, and the mayor's office. Ah, we look forward to having your support. I see a lot of great people on here that I think I can count on their support for. And I thank you all for allowing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Flatbush residents. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: All right, thank you, Josh. Thanks so much.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thanks, Josh, it's good to see you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rico Noel.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now. Time starts now.

RICO NOEL: Good evening.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Go ahead, sir.

RICO NOEL: Good evening. Ah, my name is Rico Noel. I'm the chief partnership officer, ah, for New York Edge, formerly known as the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation, SAISF. Ah, and I want to thank all the council members here. Your commitment is unwavering. We appreciate it, ah, and I want to thank you for helping us provide summer and

afterschool programming for the last 28 years. Today we serve over 40,000 young people and their families at 134 schools across the five boroughs. New York Edge stands with youth providers across the city in calling for a restoration for funding for COMPASS and Sonic summer remote and/or social distance programming. As of, as a result of COVID-19 we have successfully rolled out online programming activities to students, participating in 101 of our afterschool programs across the city. We've engaged new partners, like Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Steven Van Zandt and his Teach Rock curriculum, teaching music with kids online, and have formulated a trauma-informed approach to summer camp, which is needed now more than ever. We have also provided 300 laptops to students in need due to the significant delay by the DOE. Under the mayor's summer plan, approximately 177,000 students in grades 3 through 12 and those with disabilities are expected to sign up, leaving close to 1 million students without, without access to academic arts and recreational online opportunities. I'm going to say that again. One million students will not have the opportunity to participate or engage in any online activities, with

the beaches closed, the parks closed, and the pools closed. With the weather getting warmer and summer right around the corner, young people and their parents need relief. Free summer programs, online social distance models, are essential and necessary as part of the city's recovery from COVID-19. This is especially significant to us as we are not eligible for PPE assistance due to the size of our staff. As a self-insured nonprofit...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

RICO NOEL: ...the, the loss of quality and talented staff members will not only impact programming, it will cost us millions of dollars, 1.3 million in July and August alone, in unemployment benefits, money we would rather spend on the students and families that need it. The FY budget should not be balanced on the backs of the working families, their children, or the CBOs which serve them. We thank you so much for your support over the last 28 years. The testament that we are here at 11 o'clock at night and you are here with me, and you have said thank you to every person that has spoke, thank you all, and we greatly appreciate you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you. We appreciate you. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Stephanie Rodriguez.

STEPHANIE RODRIGUEZ: Hi everybody. Ah, thank you for staying so long on with us. We definitely appreciate it. Um, good evening, City Council. My name is Stephanie Rodriguez and I'm the director youth programs at the Healing Center. The Healing Center is a domestic violence and sexual assault intervention and prevention community-based nonprofit that serves south Brooklyn, which includes, but is not limited to, the areas of Sunset Park and Bay Ridge. Today I'm advocating in support of the [inaudible] initiative. Domestic violence is a form of intergenerational trauma. The trickle-down effects of this pandemic will affect future generations. Many victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence were also child witnesses. With schools moving to virtual learning the safety net and watchful eyes of educators have been stripped away. The [inaudible] initiative has allowed the Healing Center to create innovative ways to reach and support children and survivors, filling the void on the ground level that virtual learning and social

distancing has left. This pandemic has highlighted the existing inequities victims of gender-based violence experience on a daily basis. The immigrant communities we work in are being hit hard. Immigrant survivors have lost employment or risk their health as essential workers. They do not receive any benefits like SNAP, Medicaid, or stimulus checks due to their immigration status. They rely on organizations like the Healing Center to help with their dire needs of food, safety planning, and supportive services. Survivors who no longer reside with their abusers are also experiencing extreme trauma triggers due to the social distancing, mirroring the psychological conversion tactics used by the, ah, abusers. I am concerned with this, with what services will be available to victims when they seek help if there are cuts to discretionary funding for community-based organizations.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

STEPHANIE RODRIGUEZ: [inaudible] surge of survivors coming forward once the city reopens. [inaudible] supports organizations like the Healing Center that provide culturally and community competent services that are client-centered.

Survivors come to community-based organizations like ours because they receive individualized care that they cannot receive in larger organizations. We ask that City Council continue to fund the [inaudible] initiative, which is a lifeline to thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, thank you for your work and your advocacy.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Justin Gordeen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JUSTIN GORDEEN: Good evening. My name is Justin Gordeen. I'm the site director for Sheltering Arms Afterschool Program at PS-75 in the South Bronx. Thank you, Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, and everyone in the City Council for the opportunity to submit this testimony. Sheltering Arms is one of the largest city, is one of the city's largest providers of education, youth development, and community and family well-being programs for the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, serving more than 15,000 children and families each year, with nearly 1300 staff from across New York City. We have afterschool programs in nine schools across New York City, including PS-

75, where I serve as a site director. Summer programs for youth, including summer Sonic and COMPASS programs, are absolutely necessary to support students' education and career paths, their emotional well-being, and their families' abilities to work. In short, they're vital for our communities' recovery. Providers like Sheltering Arms are ready to provide modified programs through either virtual or socially distant programming. An example of the type of safe and meaningful services that can be provided include the film craft program that I have previously implemented with students in Brooklyn. Students learn how to properly record and edit videos and learn new communication methods while thinking critically, excuse me, critically. Programming like this supports skills development and will serve to engage students in positive projects that encourage them to process the emotional trauma caused by the impact of COVID in their communities, communities, families, and their own lives. We must do all we can as leaders, both in politics and in youth development, to restore our summer programming and make sure youth have access to safe, structured, and pro-social activities needed now more than ever.

I've been doing this work for 15 years. I started as an SYEP employee and across my time I've been able to take students all over this country, to D.C. and other places, where they...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JUSTIN GORDEEN: ...have benefitted greatly. We have an opportunity to do something very creative and raise the standard for youth development and education in this city. I really do hope that we can hold true to this promise. Thank you for fighting for our youth and communities of color. We look forward to working with you to restore summer programming. Please reach out with any questions if you have any. Thank you. Have a good night.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Justin, thanks for your work on behalf of Sheltering Arms and certainly the Bronx. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Melanie Wilkerson.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MELANIE WILKERSON: Um, I just need to say there should be no shortage of thanks to everyone that has stuck it out on this call, particularly the council members who, I've just been observing you throughout this session, upwards of 12 hours,

genuinely listen to everyone. That is highly appreciated and inspiring. Thank you. Um, my name is Melanie Wilkerson. As an employee of the Center for Court Innovation I oversee the youth program, the Youth Impact Program, excuse me, on Staten Island. We engage youth across New York City to become transformative leaders in their communities and thought partners in solving deeply rooted community issues, such as violence and trauma. DYCD-funded programs reduce violence and support public safety in the neighborhoods where Youth Impacts operates. Closing these programs increases economic and food insecurity, removes access to child care, and deprives young people of safe spaces. These factors heighten young people's risk of investment in the criminal justice system, which we obviously would want to avoid. The city is in the midst of a deep financial crisis. However, it is devastating to see the youth services budget slashed at upwards of 35%. Our young people are being deprived of career development opportunities when a competitive work force tells them that they need only apply if they have experience. Decisions such the cuts we are discussing today make our young people feel that they

are not being prioritized. In March one of my Staten Island youth shared the exciting news that he was accepted into CUNY John Jay. He was selected for SYEP and planned to use the funds to pay for colleague. At a time when so many adults with work experience are losing their livelihoods, imagine how difficult it is for this 17-year-old to find work. Since stay-at-home orders have taken effect, Youth Impact interns have been engaged in meaningful virtual programming, coordinating census outreach, facilitating restorative...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MELANIE WILKERSON: ...[inaudible] for peers that are justice-involved and developing community healing initiatives, such as self-care spaces. These youth can serve as credible messengers for their peers, supporting COVID prevention efforts, and providing crucial public health information. To close, community-based organizations are ready to carry out creative solutions to support our young people and their families this summer. We simply request the funding to do what we do best, which is empowering young people to become strong leaders

within their communities, leadership especially needed in this time. Thank you all.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, Melanie, for your work on behalf of CCI. Thank you so much.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thanks, Melanie.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jill Eisenhart.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JILL EISENHART: Good evening. Thank you again for being here so late. Ah, my name is Jill Eisenhart and I'm the executive director of the Red Hook Initiative, an organization that has actively supported youth and families in Red Hook, Brooklyn, for almost 20 years. I offer the following reflection, with the intimate knowledge of what summer in Red Hook looks like when youth are actively engaged and contributing to their communities while earning money through SYEP. COVID-19 has and will continue to impact how we live, work, and play in our neighborhoods. What COVID-19 does not have to impact are the democratic processes and innovative planning that will ensure every young people in our city has the opportunity to thrive. In 2019 81% of SYEP participants were young people of color and 84% were residents of Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx

neighborhoods, the very same communities that are currently being devastated by COVID-19. Before the de Blasio administration's decision was made to cut SYEP, these young leaders could have been invited to design play space and culturally relevant proposals to meet the challenges of the virus. To remove their voice entirely from the decision-making process while simultaneously impacting their household income was cruel. It is not too late to change the summer of 2020 scenario. Restore SYEP funding and look to the NYPD budget reductions for this funding. Convene borough-based planning committees involving youth to draft a new RFP, focusing on remote work and recovery. In a moment where our young people and their families have lost loved ones, jobs, and income, missed out on graduation, and are in lines waiting for emergency food, we must find solutions to provide 75,000 youth the opportunity to work. The youth of the city are counting on us to make this happen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JILL EISENHART: I close, close quickly with a quote from a young person in Red Hook. "The city should restore funding for SYEP because it runs

deeper than just a summer occupation. It's an essential career building block that prepares teams for real workplace experiences." I want to thank you and thank Council Member Menchaca, who has been working tirelessly around the clock for our community.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes. Thank you, Jill. Thanks for your work on behalf on Red Hook. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We now have our final panelist, Michelle Neubauer.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MICHELLE NEUBAUER: Good evening, esteemed council members. I'm the director of the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, a nonprofit community development organization and settlement house in East New York. As of yesterday we had 4600 COVID-19 cases in our community and the [inaudible], ah, city ZIP code, which is part of East New York, had the highest death rate in all of New York City. So on top of the pandemic we are now facing tremendous economic losses and cruel budget cuts. The safety net of our community is being literally ripped apart. Our community will be

devastated by the elimination of high-impact programs like Beacon summer programs, SYEP, COMPASS, and Sonic summer camps, and the elimination of the basement apartment conversion pilot program, a pilot program that is so much needed now in light of overcrowding and the quick spread of the virus. That program was promised to us as part of a neighborhood-wide rezoning in East New York and it's a promise that the city should live up to. We're also in danger of losing discretionary initiatives, like the Access to Healthy Food and Community Land Trust, which so many East New Yorkers came out to testify on behalf of that funding tonight. Really proud of, um, the residents of East New York. We'll also face reductions in college access programming because of the deep cuts at the New York City Department of Education. Our organization alone is facing 4.2 million dollars in cuts, 280 layoffs, and the elimination of services to 7800 East New Yorkers. We need the City Council to fight for us, especially since we don't have a council member in the 37th council [inaudible] district. Thank you for your time, and I'm really proud to wrap, it's a very long hearing. I'm imploring you to support the

restoration of these cuts that will devastate the Cypress Hills and East New York community. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: All right, thank you, Michelle. Thank you, thank you. Chair Dromm.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I want to see if the Speaker wants to make some comments?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Sure. I, I really want to, of course, thank this final panel, Rico and Melanie, Stephanie, Michelle, ah, Justin, and Josh, every one who has stayed with us to testify. We're really grateful that you took time out of your schedule. I want to thank the council members that have been on. Most of these members have been on nearly the entire day with some exceptions. And I'm gonna take some phone calls or hop on other Zoom conferences to respond to their constituents. So I want to thank Council Member Menchaca, Council Member Grodenchik, Council Member Rosenthal, Council Member Adams, Council Member Holden, and I especially, especially want to thank, ah, we're very grateful and the council are very luck to have council members, ah, Danny Dromm and Vanessa Gibson, who are a powerhouse team, such a wonderful job representing

the council, the, the care that they have shown today in interacting with every single person that has testified, well over 300 people, listening to them, remembering their names, acknowledging them. I heard Danny earlier asking a young person where they were slated to go college, ah, this upcoming fall. Vanessa speaking to individuals and relating to their experiences. It really makes me proud to be a member of this City Council because of how they have represented all of us in this body today. I would be remiss if I didn't thank, ah, the wonderful finance division staff. You've seen Rebecca Chasen the entire day, our committee counsel who literally for well over 300 people has called individuals by name, I think pronouncing nearly every name correctly throughout this process, ah, doing it kindly and smartly and gently. You’ve seen, ah, Rebecca, ah, working with Council Members Dromm and Gibson. If someone's technology didn't work, giving them time, ah, trying to get someone to fix the technology so that they could testify appropriately. And I want to thank the staff that is still on the call. Ah, I see Regina Pareda-Ryan who is on. I know Latonya McKinney is still watching. She has been watching

the entire day. I see Robin Forst, who works with Council Member Dromm. Krilian Francisco, I see Isha Wright, who we love and does such a wonderful job for us, Stephanie Ruiz, one our, ah, committee counsels who has been here almost the entire day. I want to thank the, ah, Jack Story. I want to thank Peter Butler, John Seltzer. I want to thank Luke Zangrily, Jack Kern, Sebastian, ah, Backe, ah, Leah Ali, Monica Pepple, Dan Croup, Noah Brick, John Basil, John Russell, Courtney Summeries, Cheeba Obachary. Ah, I want to thank all of the finance staff who are on. And I also want to thank, because they are not thanked often enough, I really want to thank the amazing Sergeant at Arms, who have been part of every single hearing that the council has had since we got up and going remotely. You see them working the clock, you see them telling people when the clock is started, when their time is up, doing it in a polite, professional way over and over and over again. They are led by, of course, our director of security, ah, Carl De Alba. I see John Viando, who is on here, who has done a wonderful job. Is Rafael, yes, Rafael, our, our head Sergeant at Arms. Rafael Perez has been on. He's been on every single one of these, ah,

calls. I see Hannah, ah, who I miss, I'm not used to seeing her in City Hall. I want to thank her. Ah, and there are a bunch of other, ah, sergeants who are still on, who have done a wonderful job, taking turns today over this, ah, real marathon. These committee hearings started at 9:30 this morning when I believe Council Member Menchaca and Council Member Dromm had the joint hearing on immigration with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. Ah, I'm really glad we had that hearing and I'm proud of the work the council has done on fighting for immigrants the last two-and-a-half years during this council, but even predating that time. Council Member Menchaca has been chair of that committee for six-and-a-half years and I'm proud of all the work that we have done. Hopefully for New Yorkers that are still watching, I know we only have this panel that is still in, but for anyone who is on the live stream watching this, you have seen the dedication, not just of the council members, but of the really talented staff that we're tremendously grateful for, the finance division staff, but also staff members that don't get the recognition and they do this hard work every single day, and that is the Sergeant at Arms, who literally

from their homes, with their families, having spouses and children and loved ones to take care of, they have literally showed up every single day since we have had these hearings in a dedicated, professional, thoughtful, calm, and measured way. If you see all of them are still wearing their polo t-shirts, ah, that represent the City Council. Ah, still dressing professionally, ah, during this time. So I really, really want to thank the public, New Yorkers who have shown up. Rebecca Chasen let me know that earlier that in normal years outside of a pandemic we usually have around 150 people who end up testifying in the public session, who come into the chambers and wait the entire day. Today we have heard from over 330 New Yorkers that have spent time out of their busy days to testify on the issues that matter to them. And I, I lastly, ah, just want to say before I just talk about the budget generally, I really, really want to thank, and I can't hit this home enough, Danny Dromm and Vanessa Gibson have done an unbelievable job, unbelievable job during these budget hearings. They have literally sat through dozens of hours of hearings working our colleagues on the council, working with the staff, and what many

people don't know is that they have done many, many hours of preparation off of these videos, working with the finance staff, understanding what the issues are, coming to budget negotiation team meetings, meeting with Latonya McKinney and Rebecca and Regina and the rest of the finance staff that are on here. But Danny and Vanessa, I am so proud of them, what they have done the last two-and-a-half years, but especially over the last few weeks as we've been having this hearings remotely. They really, ah, represent us incredibly well. Every, ah, previous year, I believe the last, ah, seven years that I've been on the council, this year and the previous years, both as speaker and before I was speaker, ah, I would sit in under Chair Ferreras-Copeland, the former chair of the Finance Committee, and now under Chair Dromm, and on the final day of executive budget hearings I would sit there the entire time until the last person could testify in those council chambers. And I had to step away a few times today, actually for a couple of hours I had to step away to do some other work that I've been working with the council staff on related to legislation and the budget, but for the vast majority of these hearings today since

the comptroller testified at 11 o'clock this morning, I have been here. I've had the camera off. I've been emailing and reading and looking at documents, but I've been listening to the members of the public who have thoughtfully shown up with prepared testimony to talk about their community, their neighborhood, their vulnerable community, and why this budget matters to them. So I really want to thank you, Danny, I really want to thank you, Vanessa, for doing such a remarkable job in representing this City Council so well. The final thing I will say before I allow, ah, our chairs or other members to give some parting remarks, the last thing I will say is this is a hard budget, and I think it's important to say that. This is a really hard budget. And part of what I was doing today on the phone when I had to step away is I was on the phone with members of our House Congressional delegation, I was on the phone with Senator Schumer for 25 minutes today, because so much of what we are gonna be able to do or not be able to do is going to come down to the federal money that we are really relying upon, this revenue replacement money, money for education, money for social services. We need

money for undocumented New Yorkers who have not been covered in these previous ah, ah stimulus bills. So I was on the phone today. And I just want to be very candid. If we don't get the money from the feds we are in deep, deep, deep trouble. We are required by state law to pass a balanced budget. We are required by state law to pass a budget before July 1. And so if we don't get this money we will have to make cuts that we would never have dreamt of before. And so anyone that's watching, please call your House members. Call our senators. Thank them for fighting for us and if you have family members in states that have Republican senators, we need every Republican senator to hear from Americans on why this next stimulus bill with state and local aid is so important. All the decisions that we are trying to make over the next, ah, five-and-a-weeks as we get to the end of June comes down to passing this next stimulus bill with a trillion dollars of state and local aid in it. The House bill would give us 12 billion dollars in this upcoming fiscal year. It would help us get through this crisis. It would give us 4 billion dollars in the next fiscal year, and that doesn't even count money for schools or food or

social services that are separate from the state and local aid. If we got that money in this bill we could get through this budget and lift up vulnerable, hard-hit communities, and the folks that need it the most. So I apologize for speaking so long, but there are so many people to thank, the council members, the staff, and New Yorkers. Our city has been hit hard over the last two-and-a-half months but as Council Member Menchaca could tell you, as many other members on this call could tell you, our city's been hit hard before. Hurricane Sandy hit our city hard. 9/11 hit our city hard. The Great Recession of 2008 and 2009 hit our city hard. And I wasn't here for it, but the fiscal crisis of the 1970s hit our city hard. Ah, Barry Grodenchik was here for it, he raised his hand. Ah, so we will get through this together if we are united, if we are kind, and if we are compassionate as we try to make these decisions. But as was said in the movie Jerry McGuire, show me the money. And that's what I'm asking for from Mitch McConnell and from the Republican Senate. Show us the money. New York City gives 100 billion dollars more every four years to the feds than we get back. We are fine with helping poor people in Kentucky. We are actually

1 2 happy to help poor people in red states. But we are
3 the hardest hit part of America right now and these
4 communities of color, these immigrant-rich
5 communities, these low-income communities, in, ah,
6 the Far Rockaway, in Coney Island, in Red Hook, in
7 the South Bronx, this is not a game. These
8 communities have been decimated and devastated. We
9 need this help to recover and to get New Yorkers the
10 help they need. So I spoke for a while, but this has
11 been a long day. I haven't spoken much today. I've
12 listened, ah, almost for 12 hours. Ah, but I wanted
13 to end by thanking many people and by really laying
14 out what is at stake for our city, ah, over the next
15 six weeks. We need the federal money. If we don't
16 get the federal money all the enhancements everyone
17 has asked for today, it's not possible. As much as
18 we want to do it, it's not possible. We just can't
19 do it. We have to pass a balanced budget. We have a
20 9 billion dollar hole in our budget. If we don't get
21 the federal money we are in deep, deep trouble on all
22 the programs so many people have cared about and
23 talked about today. So, again, thank you to the
24 staff, the finance division, thank you to the
25 wonderful Sergeant at Arms, led by our, our dear

Rafael Perez and Carl de Alba. Ah, thank you to the council members and thank you to the final panel, panel number 40, panel four zero brought us into the end on this, and I will turn it back, ah, to Chairs Dromm and Gibson and the rest of the council members. Thank you all so much. I'm really grateful to be able to work with all of you. I just saw Regina yawn, which means I'm gonna stop talking.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [laughs] All right, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. And I know Chair Gibson wants to make a few remarks.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Oh, my goodness. Thank you so much. Wow, what a day this has been. Um, I'm so emotional as we close this hearing. I'm so grateful to be a part of this council and to be an elected official for such a time as this, and I echo the sentiments of our Speaker. Thank you, Corey Johnson. You named everybody, so I don't have the name job, 'cause usually I do that [laughs]. But thank you to, just you for being exactly who you are, and I agree. I mean, we need the federal government like never before. I agree, show us the money, right, because it's really important that everyone understands how much this funding is needed to

support all of these valuable programs that so many New Yorkers testified about tonight. Ah, we could not do this work, Corey, without you, and we are grateful for all of your time. I know you and I both stay up late night, um, just talking about so many things that we could do to make such a difference in our communities and our city. And I am just grateful for your passion, for all that you do, for not just your district but all of the City of New York. And, of course, where would we be without the amazing finance chair, Danny Dromm, the most compassionate chair, the incredible leader that you have been, the relentless hours. I call it labor of love.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Literally, it's a labor of love, because you have poured into this budget process your heart and soul. And you've done it exceptionally and we are proud to work with you and call you our colleague and our chair. And I thank you for all the hours. I told you I would be here with you to the very end, because I knew how important this was. Um, and to all our colleagues that have remained on the call on our budget hearing. Thank you to Carlos, thank you Adrienne, thank you

Barry, thank you Bob, and Helen. Ah, thank you guys so much for staying with us, for hearing all of the testimony. Ah, I think I heard so much tonight, very emotional testimonies, but one thing that really touched my heart, and I'm sure you guys all agree, was listening to our young people. I mean, they told us the business. They told us exactly how they feel, what we should do, and it just makes me proud. It means that we are doing good and we have to do better by our young people so they can take over the world. And I am so encouraged by them and to all the not-for-profits that came on tonight, and just everyone for all of their work. I think we all are doing our very best, both professionally and personally, balancing so much going in our private lives, taking care of our families and our districts and constituents and clients. And, you know, we, we know that this pandemic has hit us very hard. Um, many people are, are damaged, but we're not destroyed. We have a lot work to do and the only we get out of this is together. So I thank you to everyone, to all of my colleagues, to the finance division, this amazing team that's been acknowledged. Thank you so much, led by Latonya and all of our deputy directors and

unit heads. Thank you for helping me understand and love Zoom because many of us had never experienced Zoom before like this. But thank you for all of the hours of training to get us to a place where we could really understand the work that we're doing. Thank you to the Sergeant at Arms and really to everyone. I am just deeply grateful. We have, although this process, this part of the process is over, we still have some challenging days ahead, right? Let us be reminded that our work is not done. Ah, we are on this, this trajectory. We're on this journey. We have a responsibility. People have given us directives and suggestions and inputs and guidance and we have to take all of that and make sure that end of the day this budget is not balanced on the backs of our children and their families, our elders, safety net, social, ah, service programs have to be protected, and I stand with all of you in making sure that we get the job done. So thank you colleagues, I love and appreciate you. You guys know that in the midst of all of this during the budget hearing I've been delivering food, I've been giving out hand sanitizers and face coverings and doing everything I can, because that's the work that needs to be done.

So I thank you guys. Let's continue to do this great worker together. God bless you all. Thanks, guys.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much, Vanessa. And I have to say I love you and you have been an outstanding leader. Ah, you stepped in today on numerous occasions, and I think that you really enjoyed the job, you know. And it really came through and your enthusiasm and your treatment of everybody who, ah, came before us today is really amazing and an example, an example of what an elected official should be, somebody who listens and has empathy for their community. So thank you, Vanessa, for everything, and, ah, you are an amazing leader. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And of course to our Speaker, Corey Johnson. You know, this has been my, the best council, like Karen Koslowitz would say, the best ever, you know.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [laughs].

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I am so lucky and happy to be the finance chair under your leadership and, um, and the way that you have worked with the other members, it's so democratic, so open, I've

never seen anything like it before, and yet you keep us all unified and you keep us going on the right path. So I'm most grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for everything that you've done.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: [inaudible].

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [inaudible] really amazing, amazing job. Um, and of course to other leaders, um, everybody in the finance team, um, you know, Latonya, of course. Regina, thank you. To our counsels, you know, ah, Stephanie and Noah and Rebecca Chasen. I don't think Rebecca Chasen got out of her seat today.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [laughs].

SPEAKER JOHNSON: She didn't.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm [inaudible] learn that secret [laughs]. You know, I want to learn that secret, Rebecca, wow. An incredible job. So, ah, we, now the work begins, and as the Speaker has said, we're gonna have to make some tough decisions. So we're going, you know, go right into business tomorrow, [inaudible] tomorrow again. We get up, we have to come in, we're gonna have to work together, and we're gonna have to come through with what we think is a fair budget for all New Yorkers.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: We have, we have a budget negotiating team meeting tomorrow afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's right.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yep, yep.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It starts right away tomorrow. Based on what we've heard from the advocates, um, all day today and, and also the agencies, all the testimony that we've heard over these last, ah, six sessions. So, ah, anyway, I have some following remarks I am told I have to make to close this all out. But thank you to everybody, to my colleagues and everybody else. So thank you to everyone who testified today. Before we conclude the hearings I'd like to take a moment to give a well-deserved public thank you to the entire finance division of the city. [applause] They've worked incredibly hard over the last few weeks to ensure that the executive budget hearings have been informative. I don't know how they do all the organizing. You know, we talked about us being up 12 hours. I know all the finance team was up all last night, up to like midnight, you know, sending out emails. So thank you to the finance team. Starting with, um, our director, Latonya McKinney, to all of

the deputy directors, assist director, counsels, unit heads, finance analysts, economic, ah, economist Raymond Justy, and support staff, thank you. I'd also like to thank all the Sergeant at Arms, the IT staff who kept these virtual hearings running smoothly. Nobody, ah, hacked us. Nobody got in. Thank you for security to our IT people. And finally thank you to my entire staff, including, ah, Robin Forst, who has been with me the whole way, so, and my chief of staff, Caroline Train, and all of my other staff members as well. And with that, ladies and gentlemen, the fiscal 2020 executive budget hearings are now concluded. [gavel]

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Nice.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, everybody.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thanks, everyone.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Danny, go have dinner. Go eat some dinner, Danny, goodbye.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [inaudible] here now, you know. Bye.

CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Ah, I'm tired [laughs].

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 July 13, 2020