

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

jointly with the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

and the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH
SERVICES

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Wednesday, May 10, 2023
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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

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Shahana K. Hanif, Chairperson
Althea V. Stevens, Chairperson

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

Manuel Castro
Commissioner
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Jasniya Sanchez
Deputy Chief of Staff
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Tom Tortorici
Executive Director
Legal and Support Initiatives
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Youth Services

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Administration
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Rong Zhang
Associate Commissioner
Literacy and Immigrant Services
Department of Youth and Community Devt

Valerie Mulligan
Deputy Commissioner
Youth Workforce
Department of Youth and Community Devt

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
3 the New York City Council hearing of the Committees
4 on Finance jointly with Immigration and Youth
5 Services. At this time can everyone please silence
6 your cell phones?

7 Written testimony can be e-mailed to
8 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is
9 testimony@council.nyc.gov. At this time, going
10 forward, no one has to approach the dais. Once again
11 at this time and going forward no one is to approach
12 the dais. Thank you for your cooperation. Chairs,
13 we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Sergeant.

15 [GAVEL]

16 Good morning and welcome to the third day of FY
17 24 executive budget hearings. I'm Councilmember
18 Justin Brannan, and I chair the Finance Committee.
19 I'm pleased to be joined today by my friend and
20 colleague Councilmember Shahana Hanif, who's the
21 chair of a Committee on Immigration. We've been
22 joined so far this morning by Councilmembers Hudson,
23 Ung, Narcisse, and Moya.

24
25

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2 Welcome, Commissioner Castro and your team.

3 Thank you all for joining us today to answer our
4 questions. On August 26, 2023, the Administration
5 released the Executive Financial Plan for FY 23 to
6 27, with a proposed FY 24 budget of \$106.7 billion.

7 MOIA's projected fiscal 2024 budget of \$745,786
8 represents less than 1% of the administration's
9 proposed FY 24 budget in the executive plan, and
10 remains unchanged from the amount budgeted for MOIA
11 in the administration's FY 24 preliminary plan. MOIA
12 also projects a reduction of one full time position
13 since adoption of the FY 23 budget last year, going
14 from seven to six.

15 My questions today will largely focus on MOIA's
16 priorities as well as, obviously, coordination
17 efforts with other agencies as part of the asylum-
18 seeker response. I now want to turn to my co-chair
19 for this hearing, Councilmember Shahana Hanif for her
20 opening statement.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Chair Brannan.

22 Good morning everyone, and welcome to the fiscal 2024
23 executive budget hearing for the Mayor's Office of
24 Immigrant Affairs, known as MOIA. I'm Councilmember
25 Shahana Hanif, Chair of the Committee on Immigration.

2 This morning, we will be reviewing changes made
3 in the fiscal 2024 executive plan for New York City
4 Immigrant Services. At today's hearing, we will
5 examine MOIA's priorities and advocacy in this fiscal
6 year moving toward the adopted budget with a
7 particular focus on (1) emergency housing for asylum
8 seekers, including non-standard facilities, such as
9 HERRCs temporary overflow facilities and satellite
10 facilities upstate; (2) immigration legal services,
11 including ActionNYC, and the rollout of the pro se
12 clinic model; (3) Promise NYC, which provides child
13 care for undocumented immigrant families; and, (4) an
14 update on the navigation center operations; (5)
15 health and mental health services available for
16 immigrant New Yorkers, and finally, the urgent need
17 to fully fund the Adult Literacy Program.

18 I commend the Administration's urgent call for
19 further federal funding to assist asylum seekers in
20 New York City. Our city has welcomed over 60,000
21 asylum seekers in the past year, and over 37,500
22 asylum seekers currently remain in the city's care.
23 It is unconscionable that the federal government only
24 allocated New York \$30 million of the total \$322
25 million that was dispersed. However, a lack of

2 sufficient federal funding does not excuse some of
3 the unacceptable ways in which the City has housed
4 asylum seekers, nor does it excuse the limited social
5 services we have offered them.

6 Now that we are over a year into the situation we
7 must be building the long-term infrastructure needed
8 to help recent arrivals succeed. It has been
9 embarrassing to read in recent headlines that the
10 Administration is scrambling to find viable options.
11 This is not where we should be today. I also reject
12 the Administration using expenses related to asylum
13 seekers as justification for slashing other essential
14 city services. Investing in our recent immigrants
15 does not come at the expense of longer-term
16 residents. It helps our entire city's ecosystem
17 thrive. Further as the IBO determined earlier this
18 week, the Administration has significantly inflated
19 estimated costs for asylum-seeker spending.

20 I would like to welcome MOIA's Commissioner
21 Manuel Castro and his team. After the testimony
22 members will have the opportunity to follow up with
23 questions for the commissioner. I look forward to
24 working with MOIA and its partner agencies in order
25

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2 to finalize an adequate transparent budget over the
3 coming months.

4 I would also like to thank staff from Immigration
5 and Finance Committees, my team, and the Sergeant at
6 Arms team for working on putting this hearing
7 together. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: We have also been joined by
9 Councilmember Avilés. Thank you, Chair Hanif.

10 Before we get started, my thanks to Florentine Cabore
11 and Sandra Gray, and the Council Finance Team for
12 preparing today's hearing, and of course, my
13 Committee Counsel Mike Twomey, my Senior Advisor
14 John Yedin, and all of the finance analysts and
15 support staff who work so hard behind the scenes to
16 make these hearings possible.

17 Before I turn it over to my Committee Counsel to
18 swear in the commissioner and his team, I just ask
19 that you summarize your-- your testimony so we can
20 get right into questioning. Okay? Counsel.

21 COUNSEL: Good morning. Could you raise your
22 hands please?

23 Do you affirm that your testimony will be
24 truthful to the best of your knowledge, information
25

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2 and belief and you will honestly and faithfully
3 answer a Councilmember questions? Manuel Castro?

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I do.

5 COUNSEL: Jasniya Sanchez?

6 MS. SANCHEZ: I do.

7 COUNSEL: Tom Tortorici?

8 MR. TOTORICI: I do.

9 COUNSEL: Thank you, you may begin.

10 COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much.

11 Committee Counsel warned me that I should summarize
12 my testimony. So I'm going to try my best.

13 I had a very thorough testimony, like I did last
14 time, which I thought was helpful just to lay out all
15 the work that we do at the office. So a lot of it is
16 similar to what I reported last time with updated
17 numbers. So you'll get this in writingp, and you'll
18 have my full report there. What I'll do is so I'll
19 go through the introduction, and I'll read some
20 couple of key parts that I think might be useful for
21 today's hearing.

22 So again, thank you to Chairs Brannan and Hanif,
23 and the Committee on Finance and Immigration for
24 holding this budget hearing. My name is Manuel
25 Castro and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's

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2 Office of Immigrant Affairs, I am joined by Jasniya
3 Sanchez, Deputy Chief of Staff in Tom Tortorici,
4 Executive Director of Legal and Support Initiatives,
5 who will be available for Q&A.

6 I want to start my testimony by reiterating, like
7 I do every day, my thanks to the MOIA team and all
8 our city colleagues for their work in the last year
9 in welcoming asylum seekers. It has been truly an
10 honor to serve with so many people who care deeply
11 about the well being of our immigrant communities,
12 especially those most vulnerable who are now arriving
13 to our city.

14 It hasn't been easy work. As you've probably
15 read in reports, many of our staff and and those who
16 volunteer to work on this pull often 12 hour days,
17 you know, both at our office trying to figure out,
18 you know, how to address this situation but also at
19 our various HERRCs and shelters where asylum seekers
20 are arriving.

21 So I'll summarize by beginning to describe our
22 mission. MOIA promotes the well-being of immigrant
23 communities by recommending policies and programs to
24 facilitate the successful integration of immigrant
25 New Yorkers into the civic, economic, and cultural

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2 life of the city. MOIA works to fulfill its mission
3 by partnering with city agencies and offices to
4 support immigrants and ensure they have access to
5 city services and information, regardless of their
6 immigration status and ability to speak and
7 comprehend English. MOIA also ensures that
8 immigrants, including emerging and vulnerable
9 populations, have access to legal and social services
10 and information they need to protect their rights and
11 to stabilize their immigration status. MOIA works to
12 ensure that the City's-- that the City's voice is
13 heard in state, national and international
14 discussions about immigrant rights and immigrant
15 integration. And last but not least, we uplift and
16 celebrate the cultures, languages, and contributions
17 of all immigrants who have helped to build this great
18 city, and continue to make it a beacon of hope for so
19 many.

20 I am proud to say that MOIA's work goes far
21 beyond what the charter mandates and I am excited to
22 speak about some of the agency's achievements today.
23 (Well, I won't speak about it in my testimony, but
24 you'll get to read it.)

25

2 This testimony will briefly outline the
3 challenges that immigrant New Yorkers face, and
4 highlight some of MOIA's strategies to address these
5 challenges in the past fiscal year. As New York City
6 continues to be a beacon for so many immigrants
7 around the world, the role of MOIA is more important
8 than ever before. MOIA will continue to serve as a
9 model for other cities seeking to welcome immigrants
10 and will lead the world to uphold our values as a
11 nation of immigrants.

12 And so if you review my testimony, I go into
13 detail about our work in the last year.

14 What I'd like to do in my summary is focus in on
15 our work with Cities For Action, which is the
16 coalition of cities and counties that advocate for
17 pro-immigrant policies at the national level. Since
18 August 2002, C4A has been a coalition that serves as
19 a space for localities to brainstorm and troubleshoot
20 issues they are facing in resettling newly-arrived
21 immigrants. Cities For Action has served as a
22 crucial vehicle for local governments to share
23 welcoming strategies, information, and resources with
24 each other. Many of the C4A cities were communities
25 that receive buses from Texas, Arizona, and Florida

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2 early on in this situation, C4A mayors were able to
3 work together to push back against the anti-immigrant
4 rhetoric being fueled by some Southern Governors.

5 C4A has issued various statements affirming New York
6 City's commitment to welcoming values, and calling on
7 the federal government to operationalize an

8 intentional and transparent system for coordination

9 and communication about population flows to our

10 states and localities, to ensure adequate federal

11 funding sources beyond FEMA's emergency food and

12 shelter program for receiving communities to address

13 immediate housing and health-related needs of newly

14 arrived people and to expedite employment

15 authorization, documentation processing to allow

16 newly arrived immigrants to become self-sufficient

17 and be able to truly settle in our cities. And I

18 focus on this because New York City is one of the co-

19 chairs and leaders of this coalition, and over the

20 last several months, I've become incredibly active in

21 the coalition, making sure that we are bringing

22 cities and counties together in the absence of,

23 frankly, federal leadership in addressing the

24 challenges that we're facing in the way that newly-

25 arrived immigrants are being treated today.

2 During this unprecedented time MOIA and MOIAs
3 staff has done groundbreaking work in welcoming and
4 supporting immigrant communities. We hope that this
5 serves as a model for other cities, and that it helps
6 us lay the groundwork for the future work that will
7 need to continue to happen in our city in support of
8 the many thousands of immigrant communities that make
9 our city their home.

10 Thank you to the Chairs and to the Committees for
11 their-- this chance to testify. I look forward to
12 answering any questions that you have.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Thank you, Commissioner.
14 We've also been joined by Councilmembers Stevens,
15 Carr, and Louis.

16 I want to jump right in here. Commissioner
17 Castro, after a year and a half in office-- I think
18 I met with you like a week after you were appointed.
19 And I don't think anyone could have predicted what--
20 what was to come. But that's life in the in the big
21 city here.

22 What are the greatest needs of immigration
23 services in the city, and what would you say are the
24 areas that need to be improved?

2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you for the question
3 Chair. And yes, we met like, right, as I started and
4 I remember discussing the many, you know, needs that
5 I-- I had identified, having come from the nonprofit
6 world, you know, leading nonprofit organization that
7 serves the same population, newly arrived immigrants,
8 through the pandemic. And, you know, not to get back
9 to that, but you know, that was a pretty difficult
10 moment for immigrant communities. Lots of needs were
11 identified, in particular the need to support
12 undocumented immigrants who did not have much of a
13 social safety net during the pandemic.

14 You know, we immediately, I think jumped into--
15 into the work. My first day on the job was
16 responding to the Bronx fire that devastated an
17 immigrant community in the Bronx. And, of course,
18 you know, we responded to many other crises,
19 including the-- supporting the Ukrainian community
20 here as the invasion of Ukraine began, and the
21 ongoing conflicts around the world, like in Haiti for
22 instance, supporting the diaspora here.

23 The asylum seeker challenge is-- is, again, as
24 everyone has said, unprecedented, and it's been a
25 huge challenge. But it's also been an opportunity

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2 for us to learn about ways we can work together

3 collaboratively across city agencies and offices.

4 And so that's been our focus in the last year. We've

5 learned a tremendous amount about, you know, how to

6 do this work. I don't think in modern times, we've

7 had a focus, a city wide focus on supporting newly-

8 arrived immigrants, but it is still a crisis. You

9 know, it is still an ongoing emergency. And we

10 announced a few months ago that our intention was to

11 move from this emergency, you know, crisis to a

12 steady state mode of operations. Because frankly, it

13 is a colossal operation, having to open over 120

14 hotels, turning-- turning them into shelters, and

15 supporting the many people that that are currently

16 living in them, and are here in our city.

17 So the needs in the community are tremendous. I

18 don't have to tell you. We've, we've spoken about

19 this at length and previous hearings. But what I do

20 have to say is that our leadership at the national

21 level, advocating for immigrant communities is

22 absolutely necessary, which is why you've seen over

23 the last couple of months as being a lot more vocal

24 on this issue, and even saying certain things that

25 perhaps the White House isn't happy about.

2 We've said it, you know, on this issue: The
3 White House has failed us. We haven't seen enough
4 action by the federal government in support of New
5 York City. And I think that that's right. That is
6 one of the priorities that we are embracing, because
7 the truth is that for too long immigrant communities
8 without sufficient action by the federal government,
9 they have gone without the adequate support that they
10 need, because of their immigration status. And so
11 when I speak with-- I know many of the advocates are
12 here. [inaudible] is here, big shout out to them,
13 and others. It comes down to making sure the federal
14 government actually does something for the community.
15 I mean, not just on asylum seekers, but we've been
16 waiting for comprehensive immigration reform for now
17 over three decades. And so our role as MOIA has--
18 has been important on the ground serving and
19 responding to emergencies, but it's increasingly
20 advocating at the federal level for immigrant
21 communities, not just in New York, but in the
22 country.

23 And so a lot of the needs that I'm seeing are a
24 direct result of inaction by the federal government.
25 And so we need to call that into question.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Yeah, I often say the
3 city's compassion is limitless, but unfortunately,
4 our-- our resources are limited.

5 Has MOIA requested any additional funding from
6 OMB for this executive budget?

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So the conversations with
8 OMB are ongoing, you know. Of course, the asylum
9 seeker situation involves a tremendous amount of
10 funding and resources that are allocated to welcoming
11 newly-arrived immigrants. In terms of MOIA, we're
12 currently working with what we have, adjusting as
13 needed, and we're having a lot of conversations with,
14 with our colleagues at OMB to-- to make sure that we
15 have the adequate resources that we need to be able
16 to, you know, engage in our role appropriately.

17 Again, we've had many different priorities over
18 the years. This is different this year. I think we
19 are seeing an unprecedented situation. And so we're,
20 we're trying to figure out our best role in this
21 situation. Obviously, we're not set up to operate
22 such a massive undertaking, which is why we've
23 created the Office of Asylum Seeker Operations to
24 take on much of that heavy resource operations.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Speaking about the Office
3 of Asylum Seeker Operations, was MOIA briefed by OMB
4 on the agencies that are managing this new office?
5 Who's the point at this new office?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So when we announced it,
7 the intention was to use this office to-- this new
8 new office and personnel to move us from an emergency
9 response mode to a steady state mode. Obviously,
10 we're continuing to be in an emergency response mode
11 as we speak. We're still trying to figure out or
12 find space, to-- to house, you know, or provide
13 emergency shelter to asylum seekers who are arriving.

14 So we do have a team. We have an interim
15 director. And we'll be announcing--

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Who's the interim director?

17 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: It's Molly Schaefer, who
18 has played--

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Sure. I know Molly.

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: -- an emergency management
21 role since the beginning. And-- but the fact is that
22 we work very closely with-- with each other. I mean,
23 I don't think a day goes by without having a call on
24 this issue. And either I'm on the call, or in a
25 meeting, or someone on staff.

2 So it's a really integrated approach. And that's
3 because from the beginning, as you remember, MOIA was
4 the first agency to respond on the ground to welcome
5 asylum seekers. And so since then, we've been
6 playing the leading role on this issue, but we've
7 needed support, because it was just impossible for us
8 to take on the whole situation.

9 And moving forward, this office will centralize a
10 lot of the work. Most critically, emergency shelter
11 in our response in welcoming sometimes hundreds of
12 people per day, which is-- which is a big, big
13 undertaking.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: So one of the things I
15 think that that we're concerned with is we get-- City
16 Hall sends us a report once a week with an update for
17 how many asylees have, sort of, gone through our
18 door, and then how many asylees are currently in our
19 care. The most recent numbers we received were
20 60,800 asylum seekers have gone through the system,
21 and 37-- a little over 37,500 asylum seekers are
22 currently in our care.

23 What we would like to see is a third number, a
24 third data point there, of the number of asylum
25 seekers who we've transitioned out of-- of shelter,

2 right? And we've trend transitioned into the city of
3 New York. And I think one of the concerns is that
4 if-- if we're not focused on moving folks out of
5 shelter or moving folks towards getting jobs, then
6 obviously that number is just going to keep going up,
7 because basically, we're just warehousing people.

8 And there's been some discussion around that the
9 city had provided legal services to, you know, the
10 asylum seekers last year when they first started to
11 receive individuals in February and March. Would
12 they have been able to apply for asylum now, if they
13 if they were qualified, and subsequently been able to
14 apply for work authorization? Are you concerned that
15 that isn't happening at the pace that it needs to be
16 happening?

17 COMMISSIONER I am in a previous hearing,
18 Immigration Committee hearing, I said that the level
19 of need here is unprecedented. We couldn't possibly
20 provide legal services to every single person that
21 needs it, that-- I mean, not only would that be
22 incredibly costly, there is a question about whether
23 there is capacity amongst the legal service providers
24 to be able to do that. As it is, there were-- there
25 was a question of capacity even before the asylum

2 seekers began to arrive in our city, because these
3 are not simple cases. These are quite complex cases.
4 And, you know, unlike perhaps a DACA application, or
5 a city-- a citizenship application, these-- these do
6 require a robust followup and engagement with-- with
7 the asylum seeker.

8 I'll hand it over to Tom Totorici to talk a
9 little bit more about the legal-- the legal services.
10 But just to say, you know, like in the previous
11 hearings, you know, that it is a concern, right?,
12 which is why we've called on both the federal
13 government and state government to provide additional
14 support, because we just couldn't possibly do this
15 alone. It needs to be shared responsibility, and
16 which is why we began a campaign to call for re-
17 designation of TPS. TPS would be, in our view, a
18 better option for asylum seekers than the asylum
19 process. And of course, the utilization of
20 humanitarian parole at the border so that people can
21 get their work permits as soon as possible. Because
22 that-- that really is the key. The sooner people get
23 their work permits, the sooner they will have work,
24 and possibly be able to find their own housing.

2 But I'll say this before I hand it over to Tom:

3 One of the biggest issues, which is why much of my
4 focus is advocacy at the nat-- at the federal level,
5 the level of support for asylum seekers in the
6 country is completely uneven. As long as New York
7 City is the only city to provide emergency shelter
8 and this level of services, people will continue to
9 come to New York, and-- which is why the intervention
10 of the federal government is critical. I mean, if I
11 was a migrant with my children at the border, I would
12 probably be thinking, "Let's go to New York, because
13 there doesn't seem to be anywhere else, that I will
14 be able to get support." I mean, we've heard that
15 cities that are receiving migrants on buses are to
16 the breaking point that they're not providing even a
17 bed for people to sleep on, right?, and much less a
18 hotel, or this many hotels for people to be housed
19 in. And so it is a structural issue at the at the
20 highest level. And I know I'll be repeating this all
21 night, but the federal government needs to step in
22 here.

23 I'll hand it over to Tom to talk a bit about what
24 our plans are, and what we've been doing to-- to

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2 scale our work, and make sure we're reaching as many
3 people as possible.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Yeah, it would be helpful--
5 I mean, we agree that-- that the White House and the
6 Biden Administration has hung us out to dry here.
7 There's-- no one's going to dispute that. I think it
8 would be helpful to understand or quantify-- the same
9 way that we're getting numbers every week about this
10 drumbeat of just people who are just coming here,
11 when we understand. But it would be helpful to have
12 a number of how many folks we've helped and move-- we
13 move through the system. And so far, we're not
14 seeing that.

15 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, we can-- we can bring
16 that to our team who puts together the numbers to see
17 that that might be possible. Some of it is-- is a
18 challenge, because some folks leave on their own.
19 And, as you all know, some of it is-- some
20 restrictions around certain data that we-- we can or
21 cannot collect. But I'm certainly curious as well,
22 right? So we'll work with the team to see if that's
23 possible.

24 MR. TORTORICI: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank
25 you, Chair Brannan. You had mentioned the one-year

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2 filing deadline for asylum. So individuals have one
3 year from their last date of entry to the United
4 States to file for asylum. There are some limited
5 exceptions to that. We don't have numbers to report
6 regarding how many individuals have moved out of
7 shelter right now, but we could see if we could
8 provide that data. Nor do we have an overall view of
9 how many individuals have submitted an asylum
10 application. So we can also check into that.

11 However--

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: MOIA doesn't have that?
13 Or-- I mean, someone-- that-- that information must
14 live somewhere.

15 MR. TORTORICI: So the-- the City spends more
16 than \$65 million on immigration legal services
17 generally, and they serve both long-residing New
18 Yorkers and individuals who have recently arrived.
19 The city has also allocated \$5 million in new money
20 in fiscal 23 and 24 to launch an initiative
21 specifically dedicated to serving asylum seekers who
22 have newly arrived, and we are currently finalizing
23 the design to stand that up.

24 What I mean to say is that there are many
25 immigration legal nonprofits that are carrying out

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2 the work with city dollar, state dollars, and
3 philanthropic dollars, but there's not as much
4 coordination among them. And many of them are
5 triaging-- they get a lot of calls. They get, you
6 know, every day. Many have long wait lists, and many
7 are triaging who they call back for screenings based
8 upon their upcoming deadlines. So it could be their
9 one-year filing deadline or another-- an upcoming
10 immigration court hearing.

11 So they're individually triaging against those
12 deadlines, but we don't have an overall coordinated
13 view at this time. However, that's something we are
14 looking to stand up.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Does everyone-- We were on
16 a call yesterday with City Hall, and they were
17 referring to the screening, or the intake that is
18 done at the border. Is there a legal screening
19 that's provided once folks get to the city?

20 MR. TORTORICI: No. Not at this time in a
21 systematic fashion. There are screenings available,
22 so an individual will receive a list of providers,
23 call them, and hopefully access the screening, but it
24 doesn't happen systematically when one arrives. Part
25 of the city's rationale for transitioning to a 24/7

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2 arrival site is to consolidate that, so that those
3 sorts of activities can be carried out.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: So whatever information we
5 have about asylees now is based on what-- what was
6 captured at the border?

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No, not necessarily. Well,
8 let me let me say this: The-- The rationale for
9 opening this 24/7 intake-- or, what did we call it?

10 MR. TORTORICI: Arrival center.

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Arrival center, so that we--
12 - it provides us more time to be able to sit down
13 with an asylum seeker who just arrived in the city to
14 be able to provide them with all the needs that they--
15 - they have.

16 I went through this when I-- when we first
17 responded at Port Authority, and we were trying to
18 support people as they were arriving. It's just
19 impossible. It's just people are getting off the bus
20 after four days or three days being on a bus. So the
21 most immediate support that they needed was water,
22 food, emergency health care, and so on. And then
23 connecting them to a place where they can rest, and
24 then you know, eventually have some emergency
25 shelter.

2 The idea was to then connect them to-- to a
3 social worker so that they can-- can, you know,
4 gather that information. But there are-- there is
5 just a limited amount of information that we can
6 collect. We can't collect immigration status, for
7 instance, information that-- that, for a variety of
8 reasons we are not allowed to collect.

9 So in setting up this 24/7 arrival center, it
10 will give us more time to do this type of
11 orientation. Orientation also takes a lot of
12 coordination with between us and the providers and
13 training of those providing orientation, because this
14 is a legal orientation for immigration benefits. So
15 it's not-- it's not something that is easily done.
16 And I would say that, you know, we're moving towards
17 this, and we hope to have something up and running
18 soon.

19 But again, you know, we're-- we've been trying to
20 catch up this whole time. We've-- I mean, the last
21 week, we've been welcoming 600 to 800 people a day.
22 That's just-- it's just really hard, logistical, I
23 think, situation for us to be able to provide the
24 services that people need right as they arrive.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Yeah, I mean, you know, we
3 want to share in the success stories, right?, of the
4 folks that have come into this system and that we've
5 helped along. It's just concerning when it just
6 seems chaotic, as far as not knowing-- you know,
7 everyone's different status, right? If someone is
8 eligible for asylum, if someone's eligible for work
9 authorization, those numbers are never going to ch--
10 they're just going to continue going up without any
11 change unless we're doing something to triage folks
12 to-- to move them along. And I think that's really
13 our concern.

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We agree. I mean, we--
15 we've been trying to figure this out. And, it's been
16 a it's-- it's been--

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: What's the biggest-- What's
18 been the biggest obstacle? Is it money? Is it
19 bureaucracy? Is it too many agencies involved in--?
20 You know, what is it?

21 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I mean, I think there are
22 some policies in place that were meant to protect,
23 you know, immigrants from-- from city government
24 collecting data that might-- might lead to
25 immigration enforcement having access to it, right?

2 And so these-- these laws were in place to protect
3 immigrants who-- who might want to-- yeah, who might
4 not want to provide, you know, that type of
5 information, which limits us.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: But what type of
7 information is provided-- To the folks that
8 ultimately end up in the city of New York, what
9 information is-- If they're not giving it to us when
10 they arrive? What information is provided at the
11 border before they're-- they're sent to New York?

12 MR. TORTORICI: Thank you. So at the border,
13 Customs and Border Protection conducts screening, not
14 to understand their status but to process them at
15 that point. Certain individuals are paroled into the
16 United States for a temporary period so that they can
17 assert their claim for asylum or some other
18 humanitarian protection. And there are-- Some are
19 released on recognizance into the United States. So
20 there are different like "micro statuses" that are
21 temporary and that allow the individual in so that
22 they can claim asylum.

23 And the policies are changing. Sometimes
24 individuals and their title 8 are issued a credible
25

2 fear interview, which-- in which they need to
3 demonstrate that they may have a claim for asylum.

4 But to answer your earlier question like, "Why is
5 this so hard? And why is it taking so long?"

6 Eligibility for asylum is not a simple thing. Asylum
7 is not something that everyone can or should access.

8 And one's eligibility for asylum depends upon whether

9 they've been persecuted in the past based on certain

10 protected claims, such as their political opinion,

11 their religion, their race, their nationality, et

12 cetera. And so, in order to assess someone's

13 eligibility for asylum, you have to sit down with

14 them-- a trained individual needs to sit down with

15 them and ask them about their life story, and get to

16 those details. And then, you know, with the

17 attorney's support, provide them with an assessment

18 of their eligibility. And this is-- it's a complex

19 process that is very sensitive. And to have those

20 eligibility conversations with tens of thousands of

21 people requires a great deal of capacity. And we've

22 been working, as Commissioner said, to try and find a

23 way to maximize access to those screenings. I think

24 the-- the real response to your question is that

25 accessing work authorization is extremely challenging

2 and difficult, and when that work authorization is
3 tied to asylum eligibility, even more so, which is
4 why humanitarian-- the City has been calling for
5 humanitarian parole for longer periods than just a
6 few weeks or a few months, because individuals can
7 access work authorization under that temporary
8 status, instead of going through the whole process of
9 understanding asylum eligibility, and then applying.
10 Also TPS is quicker.

11 So you know, there are ways to access work
12 authorization more quickly, different temporary
13 status pads, but it is a very complex and challenging
14 task to assess everyone's eligibility for-- for work
15 authorization.

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you, Tom. And we are
17 working to figure out how to best serve a-- you know,
18 the needs, the specific needs of asylum seekers and
19 provide the-- you know, the support that they need.
20 Collecting information has been a challenge, but
21 we're working through this. And, yeah, I think that--
22 - The Wall Street Journal yesterday had some
23 reporting. They interviewed I guess the President,
24 and the President said, yes, it's going to be
25 chaotic, you know?, the next couple of weeks.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: It's a hell of a strategy.

3 Yeah.

4 My last question, and then I'm going to turn over
5 to my co-chair. Who is -- we still haven't seen the
6 letter -- the entire press corps has seen the letter,
7 but we haven't seen it-- of the city asking for
8 everyone to sort of evaluate if there's any space in
9 city buildings for asylees. Who was running point on
10 that operation, assessing space?

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Our Chief of Staff, the
12 City's Chief-- The Mayor's Chief Of Staff?

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Camille?

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay.

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I believe that's what
17 you're referring to--

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: --with the letter? I mean,
20 I mean, it's-- we've been very open about this. We
21 need space. You know, we need we need to find-- at
22 this point-- like eight months ago, or nine, or
23 whenever was that we had the, the facility at
24 Randalls Island, you know, advocates and everyone
25 said, "Well, you need to house people in hotels."

2 And now we have and we've-- we've turned over 126
3 hotels-- I forget, something like this-- hotels into
4 emergency shelters.

5 Again, that that is a feat on its own. It used
6 to take about a year to open one and we've done over
7 120 in just the last year.

8 Now we're looking for space everywhere we can
9 find. And I appreciate and I see many Councilmembers
10 who welcomed asylum seekers to your districts and
11 have many of these hotels. And I know your staff has
12 been providing support, ongoing support to asylum
13 seekers. It's just we need more space. Especially
14 if one host hotel can accommodate 100 200 people, but
15 we're-- we're receiving 800 a day. It's just
16 logistically, it's-- it really is sort of a nightmare
17 to be able to find enough space for everyone.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Yeah, I mean, it's-- it's
19 not possible, right? And I think that speaks to our
20 concern about trying to get folks through the system
21 because, otherwise it's going to be insurmountable.

22 Before I turn over to my co chair, I want to
23 acknowledge we've been joined by Councilmembers De La
24 Rosa, Dinowitz, Joseph, Schulman, Krishnan, and

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2 Barron. Commissioner and your team, thank you. I'm
3 going to turn to Chair Hanif.

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you, Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much and deep
6 gratitude to my colleagues who are here. And just on
7 housing, I'd like to expand on this a bit. I totally
8 agree that we are in a moment of really needing to
9 make sure that every asylum seeker has access to
10 shelter and dignified living conditions. However,
11 I'm deeply concerned that this week, families with
12 children were housed overnight in a Gramercy Police
13 Training Academy in a congregate setting. The last
14 time this arrangement occurred, in the immediate
15 aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, a child was sexually
16 assaulted. I very much understand that the city has
17 opened over 120 emergency shelters, and converted
18 hotels, and is struggling to secure for their spaces.
19 However, this arrangement is wholly, wholly
20 unacceptable. Could you share how many children were
21 housed in this setting, and how many adults?

22 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I'll have to get back
23 to you on exactly-- exactly those numbers.

24 You know, the-- what was it Thursday, or Friday?--
25 - It was somewhat of-- I wouldn't say surprise,

2 because this has been ongoing, but it-- it was a bit
3 of-- it was very difficult to manage so many people.
4 These were asylum seekers that came on flights. And
5 that then we had to figure out shelter for, and so
6 there was a scramble to find space, because at that
7 point we had been-- it had been very difficult,
8 right? This recent search, you know, happened very
9 quickly. We-- we knew we would see a search after
10 Title 42 was lifted this Friday, but it happened
11 sooner. And so the-- the old police academy was the
12 most viable option for us to provide the emergency
13 shelter. Those families were moved eventually to the
14 PATH intaking process as all the families are. And
15 we'll get you the specific numbers. And I'm sure my
16 colleagues at DHS or emergency management will
17 provide more information about what happened there,
18 in a full report by them.

19 I did visit the academy the following day. I
20 didn't meet children, but you know, I was there with
21 the asylum seekers who were there. And again, many
22 of them arrived overnight. It was chaotic, because
23 they flew in different flights. They had to be
24 transported from the airport to the police academy.

2 And so, yeah, it's-- it's tough to see. Again,
3 you know, I'm just grateful that we're able to
4 provide a place to sleep and shelter in an immediate
5 way. You know, when I was at El Paso, and you've
6 seen reports, people are literally sleeping out in
7 the streets, you know, and so I won't-- I mean, I--
8 it's-- it's a tough situation. And so we're working
9 our best to find places for people to sleep and have
10 a place to rest as they arrive. And we hope that
11 this situation doesn't happen again. But you know,
12 again, it's a very difficult time.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I absolutely understand the
14 chaotic nature of families arriving. So to clarify,
15 all the families who were at this overflow site have
16 been moved to the PATH Intake Center. So this
17 overflow center is not being used currently, no one
18 is living there right now. Are you able to confirm
19 that?

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Not children. Not
21 children. I believe are-- still adults are there, as
22 we figure out, you know, hotel space and other space-
23 - shelter space that they can move to, but families
24 have been relocated to their standalone facilities.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I mean, this incident, of
3 course, raises concerns about children being in
4 congregate settings. Can the administration commit
5 to not housing families with children overnight in
6 congregate settings moving forward?

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I-- you know, I'll
8 have to defer to the folks who manage these-- these
9 responses. But yeah, I mean, I agree that it's--
10 they're not locations that are ideal for children. I
11 mean, I've been to too many other congregate
12 shelters. It's tough. It's a tough environment.
13 But yeah, I mean...

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, I appreciate you saying
15 that this is not an adequate space, particularly for
16 children who are coming out of this traumatic
17 migration, and then needing to be in a packed room,
18 with adults and other children.

19 But I'd also like to know-- I'm assuming that
20 you're a part of these conversations about where we
21 will house asylum seekers. And, you know, as the
22 lead immigrant rights agency in New York City, in
23 your role, do you feel that what happened with
24 housing folks, families in this center is acceptable?

2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, we certainly express
3 our concerns and our, you know, our recommendations.
4 You know, but we also understand-- Early on, we were
5 very involved in like the day-to-day of where people
6 would be housed, or provided shelter. Now, it's just
7 such a massive, you know, operations. And we're
8 having to find places every single day, you know? So
9 we're not involved in everything. And some things we
10 only hear about after the fact, like this situation.
11 And I responded. I was at the police academy the
12 following day, to see what the situation looked like.
13 Our staff was there to support. But again, you know,
14 from the beginning, our-- our position was that we
15 needed to use hotels to house asylum seekers with
16 families and children. These were the more adequate
17 spaces for them to be. But again, the situation is
18 an emergency, and we've been calling it a crisis.
19 And in part, because this is how asylum seekers are
20 experiencing this. You know, they themselves are
21 going through crisis, and we want to be as supportive
22 as possible. Yeah, and again...

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Well, I appreciate the
24 acknowledgement and the honesty of sharing just how
25 the agency was used at the start of when we began to

2 welcome families, versus now. And that, of course,
3 concerns me because you and your team are the lead or
4 who we look to for the expert knowledge or the-- the
5 the wisdom on how to protect immigrants, asylum
6 seekers, and undocumented people.

7 So it's concerning to me that your team's role
8 has sort of tapered away or is less-- less involved
9 than it was early on.

10 And so I have some questions about the temporary
11 overflow facilities, like the Gramercy Academy,
12 because for me, this seems like this won't be the
13 last time that we use an overflow site. And,
14 however, with MOIA's role sort of tapered here, I'm
15 curious if you know about the-- how these facilities
16 function. I mean, you mentioned that you visited.
17 Could you give us a like a visual on how it looked
18 and what was available? I had read-- We hadn't
19 gotten a briefing on-- on this, but we-- I had read
20 that the bathrooms were in a separate floor. Could
21 you just describe how the facility functions and
22 facilities like this, the overflow centers? Because
23 they're not considered a HERRC. This is not
24 considered a HERRC nor is it considered a shelter.
25 This is a third tier of emergency housing.

2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. This was something
3 that we had to find very quickly, you know. And we
4 continue-- MOIA continues to be, you know, very
5 engaged. Like I said, we're on calls on a daily
6 basis about this, multiple calls. We're not a big
7 team, as you know, and we're trying to keep up with
8 everything happening. And this this situation in
9 particular had happened so quick, that this was the
10 best location we were able to find, to set up cots
11 and-- and bring people to-- from the airport.

12 You know, often we hear, you know, from folks at
13 Port Authority, you know, if you have no place to--
14 to send people to, then they'll end up in the streets
15 by Port Authority, and that's what we're trying to
16 avoid anywhere.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Will you give us a glimpse of
18 the Gramercy Academy?

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: It's the old police
20 academy, that-- We use the gym, you know, the
21 gymnasium, right? Part of it to set up cots and
22 NYSEM, Emergency Management, along with other
23 providers where they're in support. And much of what
24 you see at the other NYSEM or HERRC-run facilities,
25 we try to provide basic intake and assessment of

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2 needs, immediate needs. You know, water, you know,
3 things that people would need right as they arrived,
4 and when I visited it was the middle of day and
5 people were exhausted. Some were still sleeping, you
6 know, so I-- I wanted to make sure that if there were
7 any needs that my team could help address that we
8 could step in. But it's-- it's a gym, you know?

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Right.

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I think emergency
11 management here is critical, because this is what
12 they will do in a case of a natural disaster, right?
13 Set up these kinds of, you know, emergency
14 facilities.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sure. Do right-to-shelter
16 protections apply to these facilities?

17 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I'll defer that to my
18 colleagues at DHS and City Hall for that.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: This is raising concerns
20 because, again, you know, the way we're receiving
21 information is this is an intra-agency coordinated
22 effort. And my expectation is that I'll get-- I'll
23 receive a response around whether there's adherence
24 to our city's already-existing right to shelter
25 mandate. And so deferring to another agency really

2 concerns me, like it's really worrisome that we're
3 not getting adequate, sufficient information about
4 exactly what's happening in these additional tiers of
5 facilities to provide overnight stay for families
6 with children.

7 So, you know, I just want to emphasize right now
8 that we need to pass Intro 942, which would apply
9 right-to-shelter protections, no matter which agency
10 has oversight on any tier of housing accommodations
11 for asylum seekers, including prohibiting families
12 with children from being housed in congregate
13 settings, to all facilities run by the city.

14 Immigrants should not be carved out from these
15 essential services and ensure basic safety and
16 dignity.

17 I'm also aware that the Administration is
18 exploring non traditional settings such as parks,
19 parking lots, airplane hangars as sites for
20 additional HERRCs. I want to emphasize again, that
21 many of my colleagues and I oppose outdoor spaces
22 being used as housing, and encourage the
23 Administration to prioritize brick-and-mortar
24 facilities.

2 Can you describe the Administration's plans for
3 opening new HERRCs and the process for identifying
4 sites?

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. You know, the--
6 there's internal and ongoing discussions about all
7 possible options, and we continue to collect options,
8 again, to avoid the situation that we just, you know,
9 spoke about. We just need-- need to be able to plan
10 this out. But we don't have a whole lot of time.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: But why hasn't there been a
12 planning model? Is the idea that the new Office of
13 Asylum Seeker Operations will be where Interim
14 Director Molly and her team determine the available
15 vacant spaces for housing? Because, you know, the
16 Council has been calling for long-term planning
17 because what we are seeing over the last year, we
18 knew that there would be a continuity of arrivals to
19 the city. So to be at a place where we're still
20 scrambling and identifying Flushing Meadows Park,
21 Prospect Park, Central Park, I mean, feels quite
22 amateur.

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So we-- You know, the plan
24 was to house asylum seekers in hotels until we,
25 frankly, until something happened at the federal

2 level or, you know, there was intervention there.
3 We've exhausted the-- the hotel available hotel
4 space. We continue to look for-- for more hotel
5 space, but we're at over 120. I know, we're working
6 in a few other sites that might be able to
7 accommodate people, but again, you know, there's-- we
8 don't have unlimited hotels. And if this continues,
9 and we hit 100,000 people, especially at the height
10 of tourism, you know, season. It will-- It just gets
11 really difficult to find the space and so we have to
12 find alternative space and-- and plan this out.

13 Again, you know, we heard from advocates and
14 everyone when we set up the facility at Randalls
15 Island. We began to house people in as many hotels
16 as we could find and are able to lease. But this is
17 just, again, unprecedented. We haven't seen this in--
18 - I mean, in modern history, we haven't seen this in
19 New York. And other cities are certainly not leasing
20 hotels. They're putting people in-- I know Chicago
21 has put people in police stations throughout the
22 system. So...

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sure, and totally, totally
24 understand. I guess you know, it would be good to
25 know some clarity on well, whose role will be to

2 determine what the housing plan looks like for the
3 long term, and not just the short term? And if
4 that's the Office of Asylum Seeker Operations?

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That is in that team has
6 been working on this, yeah. Which is why there was a
7 call to-- to provide ideas as to where we can turn
8 facilities into emergency shelter.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then, earlier this week
10 at the general welfare hearing, the Admin discussed
11 its plan to move asylum seekers to Orange and
12 Rockland County. I've got concerns that these
13 localities do not have the same social service
14 network that new arrivals in our city rely on, nor do
15 they have the detainer law protections against ICE
16 that our city does, leaving them very vulnerable to
17 harmful interactions. And I'd be remiss not to
18 mention that Orange County contracts with ICE to use
19 their county jail as an ICE detention center, which
20 my colleague Councilmember Krishnan and I visited
21 last year, where we experienced the cruel and
22 xenophobic attitudes of local law enforcement
23 firsthand.

24 The Admin shared that participation in this
25 program is voluntary. I want to ensure that nobody

2 is being coerced into moving. Can you share client-
3 facing materials regarding the program with the
4 council?

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Um. Yeah. We have those
6 materials, and I believe-- or they're still being
7 finalized. And, yes, certainly, this is a voluntary
8 program. Again, we're looking at every single option
9 to provide emergency shelter for people. This was
10 one of the options, um, that I think was the
11 quickest, you know, to find that that was not housing
12 people at, like, a police academy style-- style
13 sites.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Are you able to share those
15 materials regarding the program with the council?

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. I mean, we'll--
17 we'll have flyers available, you know, and materials
18 that we'll be distributing to asylum seekers and
19 providers, you know, who, who will be engaged in
20 this-- in this program. Again, this, this program is
21 one of many. And so we have been involved, but we're
22 involved in a lot of different things. So it's not,
23 it doesn't fully--

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: A direct responsibility of
25 Moia.

2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. And then the
4 Admin shared that our city is not relinquishing its
5 responsibilities through this program. Given that
6 these locations are hours away from our city, how are
7 services such as legal assistance, job training, and
8 pathways to permanent housing being provided?

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: And we've said this over
10 and over: In addition to paying for these hotels,
11 you know, the city intends to pay for the services
12 that asylum seekers need, you know, food, medical,
13 and so on, they'll-- they'll be part of our network
14 of hotels and, you know, emergency response centers.

15 Yes, there'll be at a bit of a distance. But the
16 intent is-- is for us to continue serving asylum
17 seekers.

18 And, of course, I've been reading some of the
19 coverage from the leaders in these localities pushing
20 back. And it seems like there wasn't a thoughtful
21 coordination between admin here and admin there.
22 Could you describe what the communication has-- has
23 been and why there's been such a rampant and
24 xenophobic pushback?

25

2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, frankly, the some of
3 the rhetoric is coming from people who have a track
4 record of this kind of rhetoric, you know, to be
5 expected.

6 But we've also had very good support from those
7 who are traditionally supportive of welcoming assy--
8 immigrants in their communities.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Who's out there, that is part
10 of the sort of social safety net infrastructure that
11 you all are coordinating with? And are these two
12 counties part of the Cities For All Coalition? Do
13 they-- is there representation?

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I don't believe they are.
15 You know, and I'm not talking about elected
16 officials, you know? It's individuals, mostly
17 people, you know-- some people faith and others who--
18 who are wanting to be welcoming. They want-- They
19 understand that they want to have a role, and they
20 should have a role. You've seen some media reports
21 that the-- the response is, as you would expect,
22 divided among along political lines, right? And so
23 it's just, again, disheartening to see this level of
24 rhetoric anywhere really, but especially in
25 neighboring counties.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. I have one more
3 housing related question, and then I'll pass it to
4 some of my colleagues: So, you know, we know that,
5 given the shelter capacity issues the City is
6 encountering, it's clear that the next step of
7 managing the situation is to transition both new
8 arrivals and longer-term New Yorkers out of the
9 shelter system into permanent housing, which we've
10 discussed in many of our hearings, which is
11 significantly more cost-effective for the city.

12 And, you know, this body has been working to
13 remove the bureaucratic barriers to CityFHEPS,
14 including the 90-day rule. At a previous hearing the
15 admin committed to lobbying in Albany for CityFHEPS
16 eligibility to be expanded to asylum seekers and
17 other immigrants. Can you describe how those efforts
18 are going?

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I'll have to get back
20 to you on the specifics with-- I have to consult with
21 our State Legislative Affairs Team. But I do know
22 that anything that benefits, especially newly arrived
23 immigrants, to get them up on their feet and become--
24 settle into our city, this is something that we have
25 been supportive of. I have myself I've been part of

2 a number of these conversations, including advocating
3 for healthcare for all. But yes, I mean, the
4 advocacy, I know, that the State-- the City has done
5 at the state level, has been very focused on getting
6 resources and support for the City to support asylum
7 seekers, and eligibility for asylum seekers to access
8 benefits they are currently excluded from. And
9 again, this is-- this is, I think, a different
10 community than the traditional, or what we've, you
11 know, seen in the past. Folks here-- Assylum seekers
12 who arrived here from the border are generally
13 allowed to enter the country and do have-- legally
14 are allowed to be in the country while they seek
15 asylum. And so we're just trying to work through--
16 those-- those things out.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sure. But given that this
18 change was not included, would the Administration
19 consider making this change unilaterally?

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I'll have to check in.
21 I'll have to check in and follow up.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. I'd like to pass it to
23 my colleague, Councilmember Narcisse, for her
24 questions.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Farrah's first.

2 Commissioner, let me just ask you: The Rockland
3 County migrant transport. Has anything changed there
4 given the TRO?

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, the short answer is,
6 you know--

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: [inaudible]

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: The short answer is, you
9 know, we're looking at litigation, right?, or
10 possible litigation. So I don't want to comment on
11 something that I think will be looked at closely in
12 the next couple of days. But again, my view-- well,
13 I shouldn't say even that, right? But nothing has
14 changed so far. And we're waiting from-- we're
15 waiting to hear from our team at Law to see what next
16 steps will be there.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay. Thank you,
18 Commissioner.

19 Okay, we've also been joined by Councilmember
20 Williams. We're going to have questions from
21 Councilmember Louis followed by Narcisse.

22 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chairs. Good
23 morning, Commissioner. I do want to share with you--
24 As you said, you were testifying, talking about the
25 federal response being inequitable. I agree. But I

2 think we've been trying to sound the alarm on this
3 issue. We've shared this information with both
4 Administrations, the previous and this
5 Administration, about this massive crisis that was
6 coming to the city of New York. Myself and Member
7 Joseph were ignored. So I do want to share that
8 we've been trying to share that this was happening,
9 and now we're-- we're dealing with it. And while
10 it's unprecedented, I don't agree that the response--
11 I think that there's a lack of response from your
12 agency. So I'll just get right into it regarding
13 title 42.

14 I wanted to know from you if you could share with
15 us: What are some projections on the number of
16 asylum seekers we expect to see coming in to New York
17 City once Title 42 ends on May 11, and has-- has the
18 planning been added into this executive budget?

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, there are still-- I
20 mean, as we speak, there are still things that the
21 federal government is doing that, you know, can
22 impact, sort of, the number of people that might be
23 entering the country, and then possibly being bused
24 to New York.

2 You know, some estimates put the number of people
3 entering at around 10,000 per day, you know. It's
4 hard to know how many of them would end up in New
5 York, will be bused to New York. It could be upwards
6 of 12,000, possibly.

7 And again, I think in terms of emergency shelter,
8 and providing that kind of support to people who
9 arrive and seek that, I mean, we continue to spend
10 the resources that we need there to be able to do
11 that. But it really is uncertain. I mean, we might--
12 - I mean, we're seeing 800 to 1000 people, right?,
13 arrive, right?, in recent days when they arrive in
14 multiple buses. And then by airlines, we can see
15 over 1000 people a day arrive.

16 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: So not moreso the number
17 right? It could be 50,000. It doesn't matter how
18 many. The question is, in this executive budget, has
19 your agency factored in how much funds will be needed
20 to service X amount of folks that come in?

21 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Oh, I see. Well, not
22 necessarily funding for my agency. But the budget
23 director has-- has described the type of funding that
24 will be needed to support asylum seekers as they
25 arrive, and the-- and the projection is an upper--

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2 you know, an upward direc-- you know, projection. So
3 we've said this over and over: Over \$4 billion in
4 the next couple of years is a reasonable projection.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: All right, Chair. I have
6 one more quick question.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Go ahead.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: The executive budget for
9 IDNYC indicates about a \$2.4 million decrease
10 compared to fiscal 2023. I wanted to know if you
11 could elaborate on the reasons why there's a
12 reduction there. I know it's housed under HRA, but
13 there's some interagency coordination there. So I
14 wanted to know if you could share with us why there
15 was a reduction for IDNYC. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Reduction for it... Yeah.
17 And I think this this has probably to do with cost
18 savings across the board, you know? We'll have to
19 look into the-- what the impact looks like there.

20 Yeah, I mean, some of it has to do with-- Yes,
21 again, the savings across the board. As you know, we
22 all-- many of the council members and I speak about
23 this: There's high demand for IDNYC. And so we'll
24 need to look into that and follow up.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: We have Councilmember
3 Narcisse followed by Barron.

4 We've been joined by Councilmember Hanks.

5 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Good morning. It's
6 happy to see you in the house. And we've been doing
7 a lot of projects together. But we know that asylum
8 seekers is in that top of our head right now. Who
9 has MOIA been collaborating with when it comes to pro
10 se clinics?

11 MR. TORTORICI: Thank you Councilmember. So we
12 have been working with our contracted immigration
13 legal service providers in order to identify which
14 have the ability and interest expand contracts to
15 accommodate dollars as part of the \$5 million City
16 allocation and fiscal 23 and 24 to carry out work
17 specifically in service of newly-arrived asylum
18 seekers.

19 Among those partners, the Pro Se Plus Project, I
20 believe they submitted a letter to the committee back
21 in January describing their-- their work and their--
22 their proposed work. We've carried out five pilot
23 pro se clinics with them, so far, at the Navigation
24 Center in Midtown, and dozens, hundreds of people
25 have been served through those clinics. And we're

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2 looking to expand access to pro se clinics even
3 further.

4 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. What location
5 will the clinic clinics be held?

6 MR. TORTORICI: It's to be determined, we're
7 still working on the design of the overall
8 initiative, which we're calling the Asylum Seeker
9 Legal Assistance Network. But, you know, just-- Our
10 best practices are-- Our strategy includes going to
11 places where folks live, shelters, HERRCs, ensuring
12 that there's access at the navigation center and
13 other places. So it'll be citywide.

14 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. Who will be
15 responsible for the clinics?

16 MR. TORTORICI: MOIA will be offering
17 programmatic oversight, and guidance, and resources
18 where we can. But contractually the providers would
19 be responsible for executing the clinic.

20 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. I have some
21 questions about the process. You said, some folks
22 when they get here, they have to go for TPS. It is
23 easier to get work permit and parole. All those
24 processes: How long-- Let's say for TPS: If
25 somebody have to do the TPS, how long that will take?

2 Because I'm leading to good stories of the asylum
3 seekers, because I want to know how they get--
4 because there is some good stories, how long does it
5 take for them to get on their feet? Like the TPS, if
6 they have to get the parole? If they come with
7 parole?

8 MR. TORTORICI: It takes months. And the TPS-
9 eligible population among those newly arrived is
10 small. It's mostly Haitian nationals who qualify
11 under the re-designation of TPS for Haiti recently.

12 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Aye. And Venezuela and
13 some others too. But anyway, go on.

14 MR. TORTORICI: Venezuelan TPS is available to
15 individuals who entered in or before March of 2021.
16 So it excludes a large portion of the newly-arrived
17 population.

18 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

19 MR. TORTORICI: Hopefully there's a
20 redesignation. But I think it takes months, if not
21 years, to access work authorization, whether-- no
22 matter which type of-- of status the person is
23 eligible for.

24 And I think some of the greatest success stories
25 that I've heard recently relate to individuals who

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2 have used the self-help resources -- so educational
3 guides, how to fill out your asylum application
4 videos, things like that -- in order to do it on
5 their own, given the fact that there is limited
6 capacity. And they're able to, with some assistance,
7 submit their application.

8 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: I'm assuming that you
9 are helping with the process as well.

10 MR. TORTORICI: Right.

11 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: So what's the percentage
12 of Haitians you have right now?

13 You know, I'm Haitian. So I want to know, too
14 whether they're getting support, if they are really
15 directing to the right, you know, place and all that.

16 MR. TORTORICI: I don't have the number of
17 Haitian nationals in the City's care at hand. We can
18 go back and provide that. However, I know that
19 through the Haitian Response Initiative, led by a
20 coalition of seven community-based organization and
21 Catholic Charities providing--

22 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. My time is up,
23 but I want to know the budget, because we have
24 traditional, you say, migrants, immigrants that are
25 here that are supposed to get services as well. So

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2 what is the budget between that and the asylum
3 seekers? Are they still-- Because we are still
4 concerned about people that here already that need
5 help as well. They cannot be just, falling in the...
6 you know. Thank you. Thank you chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Commissioner, can I ask:
8 Why was the decision made to send migrants to
9 Rockland or Orange County versus Westchester? Or are
10 migrants going to be basically sent everywhere at
11 this point because we're over capacity?

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, we're looking at all
13 options, to be frank. And, you know, for us, I'd
14 rather find hotels to be able to put people up in,
15 than, you know, like, the police academy. You know,
16 and wherever we might find a hotel, I think that's--
17 we'll look at that seriously. You know? It's just,
18 as we spoke earlier, it's a much better setting for
19 families to be-- to be sheltered in.

20 But was there a reason why we went Upstate, went
21 to Rockland or Orange County before Westchester
22 or...?

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. I think it was-- it
24 was based on availability, and what we were able to
25 find in the immediate. Because again, we're dealing

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2 with like, hundreds of people arriving each day and--
3 and we're just trying to keep up with the with the
4 surge, and what was available, per discussions with
5 the State and vendors and so on. But again, we're
6 looking at all options here. And obviously, the
7 closer, the better to New York City. But whatever we
8 can find at this point, we'll-- we'll take.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: And just to clarify for the
10 record: Before, I believe-- I'm not sure who was
11 asking. It might have been Councilmember-- I think
12 it was Councilmember Louis. Your concerned that once
13 Title 42 was lifted, we could see as many as 10,000
14 to 12,000 asylees a day?

15 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Crossing the border. It's--
16 - It's unknown how many will make it up to New York.
17 But at this rate, a lot of people are being bussed
18 here. So I think you'll probably see a good portion
19 of them coming here. Unless something changes
20 elsewhere.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay. Now Councilmember
22 Barron, followed by Joseph.

23 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Commissioner.
24 You know, most of my colleagues are going to ask you
25 questions on the micro, very important aspect of this

2 crisis. And you'll provide answers. So I'm
3 satisfied with that perspective. But I wanted to
4 offer a more micro per-- macro perspective, and also
5 not something that's probably in your hands. But
6 just to give you my view of the root problem, the
7 root causes of this happening, and why in some of our
8 black and brown, oppressed communities are
9 resistance-- there's a lot of resistance to having
10 asylum seekers come, and there not for moral reasons,
11 but because of the conditions they are in.

12 But we live in a colonial capitalist system that
13 prioritizes profit over people with an imperialistic
14 foreign policy that invades countries like Nicaragua,
15 Cuba. Countries like Mexico-- They have these
16 imperialistic policies, and all throughout Africa,
17 the Caribbean, the Middle East. So it's having
18 people flee places that they love, because of the
19 conditions created by imperialism. We don't address
20 that. That's a long range issue.

21 So what happens under this system of colonial
22 capitalism, the greed and exploitation of communities
23 of color, so when you look at communities like
24 Harlem, Brownsville, East New York: A lot of our
25 residents are saying, "What are you talking about,

2 finding a place for asylum seekers? They haven't
3 found a place for us." So there's a lot of
4 resistance because we're homeless. We're in the
5 streets. We're not treated right in the education
6 system. We're not provided with jobs and employment.
7 So not too many people in my beloved East New York is
8 going to say, "Hey, welcome, come." You know. "Take
9 this spot and that spot. Take this job. Make sure
10 you get this education, that education," because this
11 system is not providing it for us. And then in the
12 immigration community, they think the immigration
13 community is everything but Haitian, African, and
14 Caribbean. That these communities are left out of
15 the formula.

16 So how do you face that? My colleagues are
17 asking the right questions on a micro level. And I
18 listen and hear that. But how do you face the fact
19 that America is an imperialistic capitalist country
20 that's creating havoc all over the world, and
21 domestically, is creating double-digit poverty. Our
22 communities are suffering 30% and 40% poverty,
23 double-digit unemployment, and then they see (and
24 this has nothing to do with this) \$41 billion go to
25 the war in Ukraine, and not enough money coming

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2 domestically to handle the situation of a capitalist
3 system that creates all of this poverty in the
4 richest country in the world.

5 What do you think, Commissioner?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, you know, I spent a
7 lot of time out in the community as well. And so I
8 have a chance to speak with a number of different
9 groups, communities, that come up to me and want to
10 talk about asylum seekers, because that's on the
11 front page of everything.

12 And yes, I hear a lot, right?, from-- from
13 people. And I've been surprised to hear a commentary
14 from even immigrants themselves who say, "Well, I
15 didn't get this much when I came here." Stuff like
16 that, right? And so what I-- what I--

17 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: You said you don't hear
18 that?

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No, I-- So even immigrants
20 who've lived in New York for some time say, "I didn't
21 get all these things when I got here, or this special
22 treatment."

23 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Oh, okay.

24 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: One of the things I'd like
25 to address going forward is that, you know,

2 immigrants I speak with -- both asylum seekers and
3 those who have been here for a long time -- they
4 don't expect to get anything for free, you know?
5 Every time I talk to asylum seekers, they say they
6 want to work. And, you know, they need emergency
7 shelter because they didn't get to anywhere else.
8 And if they're with children, you know?--

9 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Because my time is
10 limited, I'm not talking about what the immigrants
11 are saying. Because we have no problem with asylum
12 seekers. We have problems with the system that is
13 denying people who are already here things. And so
14 it's not asylum seekers. As a matter of fact, in my
15 community, they're already filling up the hotels with
16 asylum seekers. And so it's not the asylum seekers.
17 It's the system and how it's going about to dealing
18 with them. Then what the mayor is doing taken up
19 encampments, personal property of people who are
20 sleeping on the streets, because they haven't
21 provided permanent, affordable housing for them.

22 This is the complexity of this problem. It is
23 very, very deep. And I just don't want anybody to
24 think that communities that are not as open and
25 welcome and come in, are not as supportive and

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2 sensitive to the plight of asylum seekers. But their
3 conditions are worse.

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, I mean, I guess the
5 final thought is that a lot of conversation needs to
6 happen between the communities, and a lot of
7 conversations. So, so far, there's a lot of siloed
8 conversations. And my hope is that, you know, we
9 have a lot of hotels in Midtown, you know?, which,
10 you know-- I think, we-- we set up these emergency
11 hotels, to-- shelters to house people. But I think
12 when-- when folks are in the proximity of
13 communities, you know, they're able to talk with each
14 other, and build community and perhaps even organize
15 together. And so that's been beautiful to see, those
16 who have been able to do that.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay. We have
18 councilmember Hudson followed by Joseph.

19 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so much. I
20 wanted to just ask a question-- a couple of questions
21 about mental health. The undocumented immigrant
22 population makes up over half a million of New York
23 City's immigrant residents and is more likely to be
24 uninsured than any other group in the city. How do
25 we ensure that immigrants and asylum seekers have

2 access to culturally-grounded approaches for mental
3 well being? And how can the city invest in migrant-
4 specific group therapy and healing spaces to overcome
5 the trauma that they experienced?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, this is a really
7 important area. I mean, from the moment we started
8 to welcome asylum seekers, that-- that was clearly a
9 huge need. We've done some work with the Department
10 of Mental Health and Hygiene at the Navigation
11 Center, where they provided social workers and
12 support for people who are visiting our-- our
13 Navigation Center and might be-- need to speak with
14 someone. So I think, you know, that is something
15 that we want to continue to provide our, you know,
16 throughout our HERRCs and elsewhere, where we are
17 supporting asylum seekers.

18 I mean, of course, NYCare is available, and I'm a
19 big champion of it. We work very closely with
20 NYCare, together with Dr. Vasani and-- and other
21 health providers and leaders. We've been advocating
22 for more support from the state and federal
23 government on this issue. But it certainly is- is a
24 huge need, because of what people have gone through.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Absolutely. Do you know
3 if there have been any spikes in NYCare applications
4 across the five boroughs?

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: [TO OTHERS:] Have we? [TO
6 COUNCIL] We don't have that data with us. But it's
7 certainly something that we are-- are working, not
8 just to encourage people to sign up on, but we-- oh,
9 yeah, there has been an uptick. I don't have the
10 specific data. But there has been an uptick. Um,
11 we're in partnership with NYCares. In fact, this--
12 this partnership began before asylum seekers started
13 to arrive. Because what I wanted to see was other
14 communities represented.

15 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: And sorry. Could you
16 follow up with the specific data?

17 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. For sure.

18 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Okay. Thank you. And
19 sorry, just one other question. Do you know the
20 estimated number of undocumented immigrants that are
21 potentially left out of Medicaid here in New York
22 City?

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: [TO OTHERS:] Do we have
24 that data? [TO COUNCIL:] We don't have it with us--

25 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: But you can follow up?

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2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, I'll follow up. But
3 you know, it's not clear on the NYCares data. So
4 I'll follow up, you know, to see if there was a
5 significant uptick or not. Um, but this is in part,
6 and I want to clarify: some of the asylum seekers are
7 eligible for programs as they arrive, because they're
8 not undocumented. Like I said, they are paroled in.
9 So they are able to enroll in certain programs, at
10 least for the time being. And then eventually
11 they'll get on NYCares. Yeah.

12 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Okay, and then sorry.
13 Just one last question. So we know that the NYCare
14 patients has increased but if there were to be a
15 drastic increase, what will be the impact on doctor
16 availability and the quality of health care? Do you
17 have any-- any sense of that in your conversations
18 with Dr. Vasan?

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I think it's something to
20 consider, for sure. NYCare, again, is a program that
21 was created specifically to serve populations that
22 don't have-- are not eligible for traditional
23 healthcare programs, particularly the undocumented,
24 right? And if asylum seekers do become undocumented

25

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2 because they're ineligible for asylum or other
3 immigration benefits that needs to be considered.

4 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Great. Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: We've also been joined by
6 Councilmember Velázquez. We'll now have questions
7 from Councilmembers Joseph followed by Krishnan.

8 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you Chairs. Good
9 afternoon. Good morning, Commissioner. I wanted to
10 follow up on a quick question that Councilmember
11 Louis asked earlier. How-- Why don't we have any
12 data on Haitian national migrants?

13 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We have data. We can
14 provide it after-- I mean-- I think-- I'm glad we're
15 back to this. I think that both the Haitian Response
16 Initiative and the advocacy that went along with it
17 is a model to follow. Because as Tom mentioned,
18 when-- once the date was re-designated a lot more
19 Haitian immigrants were eligible for TPS and
20 benefits. This is what we're trying to do for
21 Venezuelans, Central Americans, even West Africans.
22 The federal government has the ability to act on
23 this, you know?

24 And this is why much of my emphasis has been on
25 the federal government. Because the Haitian Response

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2 initiative has been a model, I would say, you know,
3 we-- just to summarize, we provide resources to a
4 coalition of nonprofits that serve the Haitian
5 community throughout the city. And, you know, this
6 is one of the communities, like many others, that had
7 been here before the asylum situation began that we
8 were actively supporting. But I think it's a model
9 to follow.

10 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Well, the
11 crisis has been going on since 2021. We alerted the
12 Administration. Councilmember Louis and I, we
13 alerted, but everybody was sleeping.

14 How come City, State and Federal have not
15 declared emergen-- a state of emergency for New York?

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, the State just
17 declared it last-- yesterday, last evening, which is--
18 - we're glad that that's the case.

19 Again, you know, I think-- we do think that this
20 is a crisis. I mean, if the President is calling it
21 a chaotic situation, it sounds like a crisis to us.

22 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: But it's been a crisis
23 since 2021.

24 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Right.

25

2 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: So the crisis hasn't
3 arrived today, or yesterday. Since 2021. Two
4 previous administrations were alerted. And I don't
5 think everybody was sleeping. And now the chaos is
6 at our door, and we have to come with solutions, real
7 solutions.

8 So my question is going to be about education, of
9 course. Adult literacy: Adult literacy providers
10 have reached capacity and stretching their-already-
11 underrated costs to run the programs. Yet OMB and
12 DYCD continue to cut fundings for adult literacy. So
13 how does this change the way in which MOIA and the
14 Administration prioritize adult literacy city--
15 services citywide? You're-- the-- the migrants are
16 coming. They have to find place for adult literacy.
17 So how do we-- how do we resolve that?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. No, it's a great
19 need. I know we've heard it from asylum seekers
20 directly. You know, we're still having ongoing
21 conversations about all these various needs and long-
22 term needs for asylum seekers and newly-arrived
23 immigrants. And we'll be working with OMB and other
24 partners like DYCD to-- to work through this. Again,
25 you know, the-- you know, it's an ongoing situation,

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2 the-- having to-- to look at efficiencies, you know,
3 throughout our-- the system.

4 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Chairs, can I ask two
5 more? Thank you.

6 Has MOIA conducted an analysis on the impact of
7 this cut had on immigrant New Yorkers who rely
8 heavily on such programs to navigate city resources?

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We haven't conducted an
10 analysis. Just obviously, we're in-- interacting
11 with asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants who
12 seek the services and with, of course, providers.

13 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: But data also drives
14 policy. If you don't have numbers, you won't know
15 where to put-- the needs are going to be.

16 Can you tell us if there are any adult literacy
17 classes available at each of the HERRCs?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I believe we're waiting to
19 go back on data. We're awaiting on an analysis on a
20 pilot program that-- that had been conducted last--

21 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: In partnership with the
22 D79?

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. Yes. And so-- Yes,
24 we have a number of services at each of their HERRCs.
25 Again, you know, the system continues to grow. And I

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2 wish we can have these types of services everywhere,
3 right?

4 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: I would love to see the
5 data on that. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Krishnan.

7 COMMITTEE KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Chairs
8 Brannan and Hanif for today's hearing. Good to see
9 you all. Good to see you too, Commissioner.

10 I just have two short questions I wanted to ask:
11 You know, you've heard from my colleagues on a number
12 of the serious concerns that we continue to have
13 about the system currently in place for asylum
14 seekers, shelter in-- in name, but not in actuality,
15 in terms of the support that the asylum seekers need,
16 as well as the resources and services. And really,
17 how we and this Administration need to do much, much
18 more to help those who are coming here. And we in
19 the Council have been very persistent on this issue
20 for a very long time.

21 My two questions are: You know, one, when
22 looking at the Mayor's Preliminary Budget and
23 Executive Budget Response, the one statement we keep
24 hearing over and over again from this Administration,
25 is that because of the number of asylum seekers who

2 are coming here, and the-- well, first, let me just
3 dispel this: the claim that we need much more help
4 from state and federal government, which is
5 absolutely true. I don't think anyone disagrees with
6 that assessment, and State and Feds need to step up
7 on that point. That's for sure.

8 However, that aside, the budget, proposals from
9 the administration have consistently hit this theme
10 that because of the asylum seekers coming here,
11 because of what the city needs to do in terms of cost
12 and resources to provide for them, as a result, all
13 of these other agencies and services, that asylum
14 seekers and so many other immigrant communities
15 depend on, need to face cuts.

16 I don't see any increase in funding for-- we
17 talked about legal services and the complexity of
18 asylum seekers claims. I know that well. I don't
19 see any increased funding for immigration, legal
20 services, whether it's for asylum seekers, for
21 deportation defense, I don't see anything there.
22 We're looking at our libraries, for example, facing
23 cuts, which have been both safe spaces for asylum
24 seekers, immigrant communities, places where there
25 have been access points for IDNYC or other services.

2 We look at cuts to CUNY. And a massive scale back of
3 early education programs that asylum seeker families
4 with young kids would depend on coming here. We look
5 at not enough in services and resources to support
6 bilingual education. And I just saw an article this
7 morning or last night in Chalkbeat, about the fact
8 that so many asylum seekers are coming here, and
9 there not being enough support in schools for
10 Bilingual Education for teachers, teacher
11 certification, so it really falls-- it both is
12 shocking and illogical to use the surge in asylum
13 seekers here to justify all of the cuts to services
14 that asylum seekers depend on.

15 And my two questions are: First, would you agree
16 with that statement? How do you see the response to
17 what the claim is on the administration on this
18 issue, and the services that are being cut?

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, I mean, I believe most
20 of the costs associated with home seekers is
21 emergency shelter, you know. So, yeah, I think it's-
22 - it's a difficult situation. Again, you know, we
23 don't have oversight over that. And yeah, there's a
24 tremendous amount of needs amongst especially newly
25

2 arrived immigrants that basically have to start from
3 zero.

4 Most of the immigrant population that has arrived
5 prior to this situation, it's of people who have
6 existing connections, you know, families or friends
7 have a place to come to, and then they're introduced
8 to different services and-- and community
9 organizations, and so on. A lot of the individuals
10 who are arriving, hundreds per day, are starting from
11 scratch. So yes, there's certainly the need for a
12 lot of-- a lot of support.

13 And so we're, you know, we're in ongoing
14 discussions with OMB about what-- what that might
15 look like. And again, most of it-- a lot of it is
16 not falling on MOIA, because, as was said here
17 before, there needs to be some distinction between
18 the asylum seekers and the-- the overall work that we
19 do for immigrants, so that we can figure out how much
20 this is costing, in the hopes that maybe the federal
21 government could support some of this, and the state
22 government, but also so that we don't forget that
23 there are ongoing needs in our communities. But
24 yeah, again, this is-- this situation is in flux.

2 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: But it's-- it's a
3 fundamental contradiction in this budget that we're
4 looking at, that has real life disastrous
5 consequences.

6 My-- and I think you hit the nail on the head in
7 terms of safety net and social services that are
8 needed for many who are starting their life over,
9 freeing persecution, freeing discrimination and
10 torture.

11 My final question is: Understanding-- sorry, if
12 the Chair will permit me-- my final question is
13 understanding, you know, that this is a much larger
14 issue and not just with MOIA, but the administration
15 generally. What conversations, if any, has MOIA had
16 with City Hall, about this exact issue? And how have
17 those conversations gone?

18 Well, you know, we've been-- we are available
19 whenever any colleagues, you know, in the
20 Administration want to consult with specific needs
21 and in circumstances of immigrant populations. And
22 with-- with this, like I said, this population,
23 there's just a lot of needs, you know?, that you-- we
24 haven't seen in, in a long time in New York City, but
25 in recent history, and like you said. But, newly

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2 arrived immigrants come to New York in such a way
3 they do need everything from mental health supports
4 to, you know, the supports at school, not just
5 education, but everything else that comes with it.

6 So, yeah, we're-- we're being consulted on an
7 ongoing basis. That's our role within city
8 government.

9 COUNCILMEMBER KRISNHAN: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'd now like to
11 turn to Promise NYC. The FY 23 budget included an
12 historic \$10 million allocation to launch Promise
13 NYC, which extends public childcare subsidies to
14 previously-excluded undocumented children. That
15 appropriation was sufficient to fund 600 seats for
16 the programs for six months. ACS and contracted
17 providers have shared with us that the program has
18 been extremely successful, and immigrant parents have
19 been able to seek out and secure work knowing that
20 their young children are receiving safe and
21 supportive care. This program ultimately saves the
22 city money as these parents become more self-
23 sufficient and less dependent on city services, such
24 as shelter.

25

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2 In order for this program to continue year round,
3 \$20 million is needed. Unfortunately, funding for
4 the program was completely omitted from the executive
5 budget. Does MOIA support funding Promise NYC at \$20
6 million in FY 24?

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, you know, I-- prior
8 to being Commissioner, I advocated for this. And I
9 think we-- I think the program has been very
10 successful. And it's-- it's amazing to have seen it
11 happen. This this program was pushed for, because we
12 saw this through the pandemic, right? The needs--

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely.

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: -- and then through
15 recovery. And so, yeah, we're in an ongoing
16 conversation with OMB and with our partners. ACS,
17 who has oversight of the program, consulted with us
18 on it, and we're-- we're happy to support in any way,
19 just like we are supporting other city agencies like
20 SBS and TOB and so on. Because these are the kinds
21 of programs that-- that there could be a model for
22 the country.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. No, thank you.
24 Your support and voice here, especially as a-- as an
25 advocate in the past on the creation of opportunities

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2 for families with undocumented children is so, so
3 critical for this conversation. So it's really great
4 to know that you've been advocating with OMB and the
5 Mayor to continue to expand Promise NYC in fiscal
6 2024.

7 In its-- In its exist current existence or form
8 right now, does the Navigation Center, collaborate
9 with ACS to process referrals made for childcare
10 services?

11 MS. SANCHEZ: Currently, ACS is one of our sister
12 agencies at the Navigation Center, so they do provide
13 information to families with children about many
14 different services, and then provide referrals and
15 connect them with services that are on site.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So they are on site--

17 MS. SANCHEZ: They are onside.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: --and connecting families to
19 the various providers.

20 MS. SANCHEZ: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, that's really great to
22 know. And do they also operate out of the satellite
23 sites? Or is it just the central Navigation Center.

24 MS. SANCHEZ: Just at the-- the Navigation
25 Center, but, you know, the satellite sites and

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2 navigation center work closely together. So if
3 families do need that-- that referral point, you
4 know, we will make that-- we will make that
5 accessible for families.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. So now I want to move
7 into continuing the conversation on legal services.
8 And at our last hearing, we had some questions about
9 how much the Admin has spent on immigration legal
10 services. Are you able to provide the numbers for FY
11 23 in terms of how much was spent on immigration
12 legal services, and then how much was spent on
13 immigration legal services for asylum seekers?

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: [TO OTHERS:] Do you want
15 to take that? [TO COUNCIL:] Sorry, we have a stack
16 of paper here.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I appreciate that you're
18 prepared.

19 MS. SANCHEZ: So I can start-- I will give you an
20 overview in terms of the-- the funding that has been
21 allocated for legal services under MOIA. And this
22 does not include all other legal services throughout
23 the city.

24
25

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2 Currently, with-- at MOIA, we oversee the
3 [inaudible] services, which is baselined at \$7.9
4 million.

5 We also have the Rapid Response Collaborative.
6 That is also a baselined program at-- at about \$800k.
7 As well as part of our legal services, as well as NY
8 Citizenship, that has been baseline at \$250k. But
9 I'll pass it on to Tom to talk about just the details
10 about all these programs. Go ahead Tom.

11 MR. TORTORICI: And with respect to asylum seeker
12 response, as mentioned previously, the City has
13 allocated \$5 million in new funding for fiscal 23 and
14 24.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then the \$5 million
16 allocation, we were told in our last hearing that
17 this would be rolled out shortly. Has that happened
18 yet? Did we miss out?

19 MR. TORTORICI: No. We're-- we're currently
20 finalizing for release.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, currently finally
22 finalizing as in like...? Are we anticipating after
23 June 30th before June 30th?

24 MR. TORTORICI: Prior.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Prior. And is that \$5
3 million the Pro Se Clinic Program, ASLAN-- which is--
4 is the Pro Se Clinic pilot ASLAN?

5 MR. TORTORICI: ASLAN will be a sort of umbrella
6 initiative involving multiple partners, and perhaps
7 some partners that are not directly funded but
8 affiliated in an effort to maximize access to support
9 and also coordinate across.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, so then the-- in FY 23,
11 the immigration legal services for asylum seekers is
12 \$5 million, but that hasn't been spent yet?

13 MR. TORTORICI: No, the \$5 million hasn't been
14 spent hasn't been spent yet.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Hasn't been spent yet. So is
16 that-- does that mean that MOIA has not spent any
17 funding for asylum seekers for immigration legal
18 services?

19 MR. TORTORICI: We've redeployed resources under
20 existing contracts, but we have not spent new money
21 on services.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. And so how much
23 existing funding was used for support for asylum
24 seekers?

25

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2 MR. TORTORICI: I don't have the exact breakdown,
3 but a good portion of ActionNYC. You know, many
4 asylum seekers have access services under ActionNYC
5 and the other immigration legal service programs such
6 as IOI.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: And chair-- and just-- and
9 correct me if I'm wrong, Tom. This has to do with
10 challenges with contracting, you know, and how slow
11 things are, and in some of these contracts would
12 include retroactive, right?, support. So-- but that
13 we won't know until later on, right?

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. So then existing
15 ActionNYC funding did go into supporting asylum
16 seekers with their legal service needs. Is there a
17 call to expand funding within ActionNYC, the Rapid
18 Response Collaborative, the citizenship program, and
19 then a total to have more than \$5 million in FY 24
20 for asylum seekers specifically?

21 MS. SANCHEZ: Well, part of the \$5 million will
22 go into some of the initiatives that you have
23 mentioned, and we continue to assess the need and we
24 continue to be in close conversations with OMB to
25

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2 assess the need, and-- and be able to, you know, to
3 have enough resources to provide services.

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: And also, just some of
5 these programs were not designed or structured to do
6 this kind of work, frankly, you know?, especially
7 because asylum claims are seen as complex cases.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Mm-hmm.

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: And so we have, we have a
10 structure that was developed before the asylum seeker
11 situation began. We are working through that. And I
12 think-- I mean, I understand providers have concerns
13 about all the resources going to asylum seekers and
14 not meeting the needs of other immigrant communities,
15 right?, that do not fall within that sort of newly-
16 arrived population.

17 But yes, we're working through that. And I think
18 the ASLAN, or the Asylum Seeker Legal Support Network
19 is meant to be a network to be able to provide legal
20 services at scale using pro se clinics, and in
21 partnerships, like, with CUNY law and other entities.
22 What are the other partners for the ASLAN initiative?
23 And is that within the-- the realm of the \$5 million?

24 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yup.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I see. Okay. So ASLAN,
3 which will also-- which includes the Pro Se Clinic.
4 And then what are the other tiers?

5 MR. TORTORICI: Yeah. We're not ready to
6 announce the funded partners in the initiative. When
7 we issue an announcement, they will be in there for
8 sure. I can describe the overall strategy, though.

9 So it's maximizing access to quality information,
10 and public education about the various, you know,
11 immigration processes and applications that that
12 exist, forms of relief that exist, with self-help
13 information, videos of how to complete your
14 application, how to file it.

15 So maximizing access to that via the web and
16 technology is priority number one, training for
17 community members and the individuals, assisting them
18 is another large component. And then coordinating
19 access, large scale access to individualized
20 screenings and brief advice and counsel, so that
21 individuals can know, you know, the-- what's going on
22 with their individual case. And then access
23 depending upon what makes sense for them, sort of
24 triaging them into the appropriate service type. It
25 could be pro se application assistance, it could be

2 self help materials, it could be fuller
3 representation.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So just to get this right:
5 The \$5 million is going towards the creation of the
6 Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network.

7 MR. TORTORICI: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. Great. That's good to
9 know. And then, just to reiterate this question:
10 Have you all had conversations with HRA and OMB to
11 increase ActionNYC funding?

12 MS. SANCHEZ: We continue to assess, again, you
13 know, these ActionNYC contracts are housed at HRA.
14 That's where our budget is-- part of our budget is
15 housed, and we provide the programmatic management,
16 and we continue to be in close conversations with
17 both HRA and OMB to assess our needs as needed.

18 MR. TORTORICI: And we have informed our
19 partners-- so the ActionNYC contracts that currently
20 exists began on January 1, 2021. And they're set to
21 expire June 30 of this fiscal year, of this calendar
22 year as well.

23 The City will be extending those contracts for an
24 additional 18 months during which we will be engaged

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2 in a new procurement process to issue new contracts
3 under ActionNYC.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. And then is MOIA
5 keeping track of how many folks are being represented
6 through MOIA services for legal support?

7 MR. TORTORICI: For ActionNYC more than 11,000
8 people received comprehensive immigration legal
9 screenings and in many cases representation in their
10 case in the-- in this past fiscal year.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: In this past fiscal year.
12 Okay. And then is that like an upward trend? Or do
13 you-- are you collecting data over the years to see
14 the increase?

15 MR. TORTORICI: Yes. Yeah. The contractor-- the
16 contracted deliverables remain the same. But we see
17 increased demand via the ActionNYC hotline, and that
18 information is reported in the MOIA annual report
19 each year.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then-- But yet, the
21 funding will remain as is at \$7.9 million for
22 ActionNYC despite the sort of uptick in folks
23 receiving services through this program? As-- As
24 Jasniya mentioned, the-- the conversations are
25 ongoing with OMB and generally regarding funding.

2 The ActionNYC amount, some of the \$5 million for--
3 for ASLAN, the Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network
4 will be added to certain ActionNYC contracts.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. I just want to wrap
6 up here by sharing that the Comptroller-- and I sent
7 a letter to the Mayor this morning laying out our
8 request for expanded legal services in detail which
9 includes \$10 million to scale up pro se legal clinics
10 that assist newcomers in applying for asylum,
11 temporary protected status, and other work
12 authorization programs, ensuring that legal aid
13 providers have the capacity and resources they need
14 to adequately assist counsel and represent the tens
15 of thousands of migrants in the city's care and
16 placed them on a path of self sufficiency, and \$60
17 million for full legal representation to address the
18 massive backlog in New York City immigration courts
19 with 127,000 cases pending.

20 With these funds, the city could expand programs
21 such as ActionNYC, the Immigrant Opportunity
22 Initiative, which is IOI, and the New York Immigrant
23 Family Unity Project, NYIFUP, that have existing
24 contracts with dozens of legal service providers
25 throughout the five boroughs. The city should also

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2 leverage partnerships with local law schools, by
3 expanding the capacity and adapting existing
4 programs, like CUNY Citizenship Now to meet the needs
5 of this new immigrant population, recruit law firms
6 to provide pro bono assistance, and encourage
7 religious congregations, nonprofit, voluntary and
8 community organizations to assist with outreach and
9 translation.

10 An investment of \$70 million for legal services
11 can significantly reduce the shelter, stay length and
12 redeploy existing shelter space for people newly in
13 need of-- or newly arrived, reduce the number of
14 people otherwise in the shelter system, and of course
15 significantly save on the costs of operating
16 shelters. Thank you so much. That's the wrap up of
17 my questions.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: We've also been joined by
19 Councilmember Ossé. Commissioner, just-- I wanted
20 to ask one last thing. The Ukrainian initiative that
21 that was funded by the city and run by NYIC, which I
22 think was very successful. It's coming to an end.
23 Do we know if the city is going to continue funding
24 that service?

25

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2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We're still, you know, in
3 ongoing discussions with OMB about that, and other,
4 you know, initiatives. But yes, that was the
5 Ukrainian-- that was the initiative I mentioned
6 earlier today.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Yeah.

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That, along with other
9 initiatives, it seems like that's been our role, you
10 know, addressing crises as they come up. And I
11 think, uh--

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Is that something that you
13 think that's scalable to what we're dealing with now?

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I think both that and the
15 Haitian Response Initiatives and other work we've
16 done in response to crises have certainly helped us,
17 you know, understand how to address this-- this new
18 situation. But you know, the magnitude is huge.

19 Ideally, we can combine much of his work and see
20 where we can-- we can be more efficient. Because a
21 lot of it does-- is very similar, right?, in terms of
22 helping people connect to services, and also legal--
23 legal orientation, and so on.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay.

25

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2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: But I would say that, you
3 know, New York City was the first to invest in this
4 situation. And since then, the state and the federal
5 government have stepped in and invested in support
6 for Ukrainian communities. We'd love to see that
7 level of investment by the state and federal
8 government in this new community arriving.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay, thank you all so
10 much, and we look forward to working with you. Thank
11 you.

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you so much, Chairs.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Thank you.

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I appreciate it.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: We will take a little break
16 and then we're going to hear from DYCD.

17 [24 MINUTES' SILENCE] [114:30-138:30]

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Good morning.
19 Can everybody find the seat? Everybody find the seat
20 and settle down. We're about to begin. Can
21 everybody find the seat please?

22 [2 MINUTES SILENCE]

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay, good afternoon.
24 We're now ready to begin the final executive budget
25 hearing for today, day three. We will be focused on

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2 the Department of Youth and Community Development.

3 I'm joined now by my colleague, Councilmember Althea
4 Stevens, who's the Chair of the Committee on Youth
5 Services. In addition to those who've been here with
6 us since the start, we've also been joined by
7 Councilmembers Powers, RICHARDSON JORDAN, Sanchez,
8 and Riley.

9 I want to welcome Commissioner Howard and your
10 team. Thank you all for joining us today to answer
11 our questions about the budget.

12 On April 26, 2023, the Administration released
13 the Executive Financial Plan for FY 23 to 27 with a
14 proposed FY 24 budget of \$106.7 billion. DYCD's
15 proposed fiscal 24 budget of \$1.2 billion represents
16 less than 1% of the administration's proposed FY 24
17 executive budget. This is an increase of \$208
18 million, or 22% from the \$943 million originally
19 budgeted in the preliminary plan. This increase
20 results from several actions, mostly \$184.9 million
21 added for transferring the office of neighborhood
22 safety from the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice to
23 DYCD, \$23.9 million added for Temporary Assistance
24 for Needy Families, and a \$9.5 million funding
25 adjustment for the Office of Equal Opportunity, which

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2 is partially offset by a PEG reduction of \$9.1
3 million from less-than-anticipated spending on the
4 Summer Youth Employment and Work, Learn & Grow
5 programs. DYCD also projects a reduction of seven
6 full time positions since the adoption of the FY 23
7 budget last year.

8 My questions today will largely focus on an
9 overview of DYCD's proposed budget, including new
10 needs, headcount, and the effects of the recent PEGs
11 as well as summer youth programs, but I now want to
12 turn to my co chair for this hearing, Councilmember
13 Althea Stevens for her opening statement.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Chair Brannan.
15 Good-- well, good morning, or good afternoon. Good
16 afternoon, morning. Oh, good morning. Thank you,
17 Justin. I know it's only 11:30. And welcome to
18 fiscal 2024 executive budget hearing for the
19 Department of Youth and Community Development. I'm
20 councilmember Althea Stevens, Chair of committee on
21 youth services. So we'll be hearing from DYCD
22 Commissioner Keith Howard, First Deputy Commissioner
23 and Chief Financial Officer. Thank you all for
24 joining us.

25

2 After discussing the fiscal 2024 preliminary
3 expense budget for DYCD, less than two months later,
4 we come together to discuss the fiscal 2024 executive
5 expense budget, which stands at \$1.2 billion, total
6 headcount of 544 positions, supported by \$449.8
7 million in personnel services, and a total of \$1.1
8 billion and other-than-personnel services.

9 This fiscal budget is-- is \$20.2 million more
10 than the fiscal 2023 adopted budget. DYCD's fiscal
11 2024 budget increased by \$208 million, or 22% from
12 the \$943 million budgeted in fiscal 2024 preliminary
13 financial plan.

14 The increases as a result of a number of actions.
15 The most significant is with the increase of \$184.9
16 million for the program transfer of the Office of
17 Neighborhood Safety from the Mayor's Office of
18 Criminal Justice to DYCD, \$29.9 million for Temporary
19 Assistance for Needy Families, and \$9.5 million for
20 Office of Equal Opportunity. Funding adjustments,
21 offset by a program PEG reduce of \$1.9 million of
22 less than anticipated spending for SYEP and WLG
23 (Work, Learn & Grow) program. DYCD fiscal 2024
24 Executive Budget has no need-- Executive Budget has
25 one new need: Office for Neighborhood Safety

2 overhead headcount, and I will like to know how this
3 program transferred from the Mayor's Office of
4 Criminal Justice and the impact of DYCD taking on
5 this program.

6 At a time when New York-- At a time when New
7 York City has some of the highest unemployment rates
8 for young people in the country-- has the highest
9 unemployment rate for young people in the country,
10 and a significant increase of young people being
11 arrested, it is unconscionable that we are, or would
12 be thinking about cutting funding for programs like
13 SYP, and WLG, and any other youth programming.
14 Cutting SYP and WLG after one year of expanding sends
15 a message to young people and family that we as a
16 city are uninterested in actually addressing their
17 needs. In the city's fiscal 2024 preliminary budget
18 response, the Council identified several areas of
19 concern relating to the development, safeguard,
20 education and dependence on New York City's youth.
21 The budget response included five priorities related
22 to DYCD, with a total value of \$46 million. I'm
23 disappointed to see that none of this funding was
24 added to the executive budget. For the thousands of
25 children and working families my colleagues and I

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2 represent, the services are consistently fighting for
3 at these hearings, SYP, Compass, adult literacy, and
4 runaway homeless youth are essential to their daily
5 lives. The time has come for us to do even more for
6 the success of our youth and young adults, to invest
7 in the programs that will make a difference for youth
8 to work over the summer, a safe haven to stay, a
9 place to learn to be equipped with the skills they
10 can become productive citizens in society,
11 translating into homes for themselves and safe places
12 for recreation activities.

13 As we come closer to the fiscal 24 adopted
14 budget, the Council is working to ensure the city
15 budget is fair, transparent, and accountable to all
16 New Yorkers. As the Chair of the-- Chair of the
17 Committee on Youth Services, I will continue to
18 advocate for accountability and transparency to
19 ensure that the budget represents the needs and
20 interests of young people, that the programs for the
21 youth and young adults are equipped to serve, serving
22 everyone and it's in its needs.

23 Everyone here in today's fiscal 2024 executive
24 budget has a responsibility with the objective of
25 best serving the youth of New York City. It is my

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2 expectation that DYCD will be responsive to the
3 questions and concerns of council members. It is my
4 hope that the fiscal 2024 budget adopted meet the
5 goals set forth by Council. We want to ensure that
6 every youth and young adult program is provide--
7 provided with the necessities to me the everyday
8 challenges are you face.

9 I would like to take the opportunity to thank
10 Kate Connolly, my Chief of Staff and the entire 18
11 back at the home district office, Sondra Gray,
12 Financial Analyst, Alia Lee, Unit Head, Christine
13 Yemen, Counsel to the Committee, and Elizabeth Arts
14 who is home sick, and hope you feel better. And I
15 will-- I would like to pass it back to the Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: We've also been joined by
17 Councilmember Farias. We're now going to turn it
18 over to my Committee Counsel to swear in the
19 witnesses for their testimony.

20 COUNSEL: Good morning. Can you raise your right
21 hands please? Do you affirm that your testimony will
22 be truthful to the best of your knowledge,
23 information, and belief and you will honestly and
24 faithfully answer councilmember questions?
25 Commissioner Howard.

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2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes.

3 COUNSEL: First Deputy Commissioner Cheng?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yes.

5 COUNSEL: CFO Bailey?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Yes.

7 COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Rattray?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Yes.

9 COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Haskell?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes.

11 COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Halbridge?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Yes.

13 COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Bobbitt?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Yes.

15 COUNSEL: Associate Commissioner Zhang?

16 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yes.

17 COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Mulligan?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yes.

19 COUNSEL: Thank you commissioner may begin.

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Good morning, Chair Stevens
21 and Brannan, and members of the Youth Service and
22 Finance Committee. I am DYCD Commissioner Keith
23 Howard, and I'm joined by First Deputy Commissioner
24 Alan Cheng, and Chief Financial Officer, Nevita
25 Bailey.

2 We are pleased to be here to discuss the fiscal
3 2024 executive budget. Despite the budget challenges
4 we face, the executive budget stands at a record
5 \$1.15 billion, preserves all existing programming and
6 places DYCD in a strong place for a successful 2024.
7 This is due to the Administration's commitment to
8 youth services, and significantly lower-- lowering
9 DYCD's PEG target to our cues and revenue
10 maximization to avoid cutting our critical programs.
11 DYCDs Executive Budget breaks down as follows: \$891
12 million (or approximately 77%) is city tax levy, \$7
13 million (or less than 1% is state funding), \$75
14 million (or approximately 7% is federal funding), and
15 \$142 million (or approximately 12%) is intercity
16 funding.

17 We appreciate the Mayor and the City Council's
18 strong support of DYCD's critical services to the
19 city's young people and family. This budget ensures
20 that young people will be engaged this summer and
21 throughout the year.

22 Summer youth employment: We're gearing up for
23 the 2023 summer youth employment SYEP, and this year
24 marks the 60th anniversary of the program. A record
25 173,730 young people applied and we are currently

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2 enrolling them into the program. Recruitment for
3 worksites is going strong, with to date 8,137
4 commitments, including 64 for city agencies. To
5 date, we have enrolled more than 47,000 Young people,
6 nearly two times more than this time last year. And
7 we appreciate the City Council's strong commitment to
8 promoting SYEP and hosting young people in their
9 offices.

10 Summer Rising: We received 138,900 applicant--
11 applications for Summer Rising. As we discussed in
12 March, we made a significant improvement to the
13 enrollment process. Families were able to apply
14 anytime during the enrollment period process, no more
15 "first-come/first-served" and rank preferences for
16 multiple site locations. Some student groups have
17 priority for Summer Rising enrollment, such as
18 students and temporary housing, academically mandated
19 students, and students with disabilities. We are
20 also offering priority consideration for students
21 enrolled in a DYCD-funded after-school program at
22 their program Summer Rising location to accommodate
23 students and families who are accustomed to year
24 round programming from the CBO providers, our

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2 partners. Families should start to hear about their
3 children's-- their child's placement very soon.

4 Exploring Futures will be a new part of Summer
5 Rising to offer career exploration and early exposure
6 to career opportunities for our middle school
7 students, including STEM. Exploring Futures will
8 make learning and activities available to all Summer
9 Rising students in grades six to eight. Exploring
10 Futures is a partnership of DYCD with the New York
11 City public schools, CUNY Explorers, Expand Ed
12 Schools and [inaudible]. I also want to talk about
13 the success of Youth Count this year. And most of
14 the Council especially the chair was involved in our
15 Youth Count. Chair Stevens, I also wanted to give
16 you two important updates since the April hearing on
17 Runaway and Homeless Youth Services. A record 3,422
18 surveys were collected in January for the 2023 Youth
19 Count. This is a 334% increase from last year. I
20 just want to echo that one more time: A record 3,422
21 surveys were collected in January for the 2023 Youth
22 Count, a 334% increase from last year. In addition
23 to the value of gaining information about where youth
24 stayed overnight, the increase in the number of
25 surveys mean that young people, hundreds of young

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2 people learned about the RHY services available
3 through DYCD-funded partners. The huge success in
4 surveys is the result of some very, very hard work
5 from the RHY providers, our RHY team at DYCD, our
6 partners in the Beacon Program, Cornerstone, COMPASS,
7 and of course, councilmembers, sister agencies, and
8 all other community partners to get the word out. It
9 was all hands on deck.

10 As you know, we recently hosted a feedback
11 session with youth count stakeholders earlier this
12 week, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
13 The youth count will be finalized in the coming
14 months.

15 The Office of Neighborhood Safety (this was
16 mentioned just in the current reading): As you know
17 earlier this year, Mayor Adams entrusted DYCD with
18 the Office of Neighborhood Safety, ONS. These
19 programs are aligned with DYCD's mission and improves
20 community-police relations, reduces crime,
21 incarceration, and diminishes contact with the
22 justice system. Included in the Executive Budget is
23 approximately \$185 million to support ONS contracts.
24 We are pleased that the budget includes additional
25

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2 headcount to support this vital work, as ONS
3 transitions and continues to transition to DYCD.

4 I want to thank the councilmembers once again for
5 the opportunity to discuss the executive budget, and
6 my team and I are pleased to answer any questions
7 that you may have. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Thank you, Commissioner.
9 So DYCD's FY 24 budget is \$1.2 billion, an increase
10 of \$20.2 million from the FY 23 adopted budget of
11 \$1.1 billion. It's primarily driven by the \$184.9
12 million transfer from ONS, the Office of Neighborhood
13 Safety Program, which is offset by reductions of
14 about \$165 million. So aside from Council
15 discretionary funding that typically takes place at
16 the adopted budget, could you provide specifics on
17 the cause of the reductions of those programs? And
18 does the agency track the performance of those
19 programs?

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Which specific programs are
21 you referring to?

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: The-- we could start with
23 the Office of Neighborhood Safety program.

24 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: The Office of Neighborhood
25 Safety program is transitioning over to DYCD. The

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2 \$185 million is transitioning over into our budget.

3 We submitted a New Needs, and the New Needs were
4 actually approved. So when you talk about program
5 reduction, could you just be more specific, in ONS?

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: So the ONS program is
7 offset by program reductions of \$164.7 million.
8 Correct?

9 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Right.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay. So what-- what are
11 those-- those reductions are from what?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Good morning
13 Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Good morning.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: And I apologize.
16 Um, so I just want to make sure I understand your
17 question clearly. For the FY 23 budget, our budget
18 really changed around \$30 million. So I think I'm
19 having-- we're having a little difficulty trying to
20 understand the \$100 million dollars you're referring
21 to. Do you want to understand the difference in our
22 budget in FY 23?

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Yeah. Yes.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So DYCD had a
25 number of PEGs that happened in the November and Jan

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2 plan. The November plan was primarily composed of
3 accruals in our program areas that was across in our
4 Beacon, after school, COMPASS. We've had accrual
5 PEGs and our workforce programs that reflected in
6 November PEG as well as in the exec PEG. And so we
7 had reductions in our workforce programs. Again,
8 these are all accrual PEGs, no major reductions to
9 services. I think there was a reduction or a swap in
10 revenue for the literacy program. And there was a
11 reduction in some of our COMPASS programs. But
12 ultimately, there was no major contractual reductions
13 for our contracts this year, which we are very proud
14 of in this fiscal climate that we were able to meet
15 with, in compliance with the city's goal to reduce
16 the budget but by doing so not actually cutting any
17 contracts.

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Right. And I just want to
19 emphasize the 100,000 young people that are in our
20 Summer Youth Employment Program. So we are on course
21 to be able to meet and match that 100,000 young
22 people.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: So the-- your Executive
24 Plan includes a New Need for the ONS headcount
25 starting at 28 and FY 24, and increasing to 62 in FY

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2 26. Could you tell us why the headcount increased in
3 the out years?

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, I guess, as we're
5 rolling out the programs, we also have to be in
6 consideration exactly what the programs are, in terms
7 of the support that's needed for those programs. So
8 not necessarily being able to say, "Okay, we need a
9 specific amount of headcount." But as we're growing
10 the program, and this is going into our-- into our
11 budget and into our program space, you know, we're
12 leaving room to be able to understand exactly what
13 additional programming investment we're going to
14 need.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Does DYCD plan to reach out
16 to councilmembers to assist in filling any of these
17 open positions?

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Sure, absolutely.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay, so the executive plan
20 includes funding decreases of \$36 million related to
21 the PEG savings. The agency was able to locate
22 savings in three initiatives, which we spoke about
23 ONS, and then we have the executive plan includes
24 \$9.1 million reduction, \$8.8 million dollar
25 additional in FY 25 and the out years, and less than

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2 anticipated spending for SYEP and Work, Learn & Grow.

3 With the current youth service crisis, how is it
4 possible that the executive plan introduces a less-
5 than-anticipated funding and DYCDs budget?

6 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So those are historical
7 numbers and returns with regards to SYEP, and
8 historical underspending in the WLG program.

9 Basically, its efficiencies and looking at exactly
10 where the accruals are and where there are savings
11 and savings opportunities.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay, but is the decreased
13 funding going to prevent DYCD from providing services
14 to more low income families?

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So we traditionally have
16 always reached out to families to make sure that
17 there's any waitlist on our SYEP to make sure we fill
18 those slots. That is not stopping and that will not
19 stop.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Are there any other new
21 needs submitted by DYCD to OMB that weren't included
22 in the Executive Budget?

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay. DYCD's Executive
25 Plan includes funding for total of 517 full time

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2 positions in the current year, increasing to 544
3 positions in FY 24. Has DYCD hired any of the vacant
4 positions since the preliminary budget when the
5 headcount was at 478?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Sure, I can answer
7 that question. So currently, we still-- we have 479
8 on board. We have 38 vacancies, of which 12 are in
9 process of being hired upon. So we are making
10 progress since the preliminary hearing, but we've
11 been participating in a lot of the citywide job fairs
12 and other things to get folks on board.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay, but you've only
14 brought on one new person since January?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Not since-- Since the
16 preliminary, we-- yeah, we've netted only one new
17 full time headcount.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: But I also want to add,
20 Chair, that, you know, there are job fairs going on,
21 and we're constantly involved in those job fairs that
22 are being run by DCAS and other city agencies as
23 well.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: But the plan includes
25 funding for 517 full time positions, right? Fiscal

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2 year is over and month and a half. Do we think we're
3 going to hire that many more people by then?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: That's our goal. And
5 the 517 is also part of the RFI 24. It's included in
6 the FY 24 headcount as well. So this is not just,
7 uh--

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: well, it increases to 544
9 by FY 24, right?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Including the ONS
11 headcount, yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay, but if we've only
13 hired one person since January, how are we going to
14 get the 517 in a month and a half?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: That's why we're
16 doing a full-court press with the citywide hiring
17 fairs, as well as other ways to bring in new staff
18 including participating in CUNY, partnering with CUNY
19 to place folks here in the agency.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: And what about staffing for
21 that deal just with contracting, with getting
22 contracts approved out the door. Are we aggressively
23 looking to hire those folks? How many positions do
24 you have available there?

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: We have-- As of right
3 now we have six vacancies in our procurement shop.
4 And yes, we are aggressively looking at hiring.
5 Those are part of the jobs that we have been working
6 in the job fairs as well as looking at other ways to
7 bring on--

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: What's the total headcount
9 of the procurement team?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: It's about 40. I
11 don't have the exact number.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay. I don't want to take
13 all the time. I want to give it to my Chair. But
14 something about Summer Rising: What are some of the
15 changes that that DYCD plans to make this summer to
16 enhance the program?

17 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So one of the things that I
18 mentioned in my testimony is that we are with middle
19 school kids, we're doing a career exploration. I
20 think that's a positive to be able to get young
21 people into thinking about career and career
22 exploration.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: With regard to SYEP: So
24 the FY 24 budget does not include the additional one-
25 time funding for SYEP MetroCards. If this funding is

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2 not received in the adopted budget, how will it
3 affect the success of the program?

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We understand the
5 challenge, Chair, that the city is going through.
6 And in that being said, we understand the challenges
7 when it comes to the migrant and asylums seekers.
8 And not only that, but with some of the collective
9 contracts that have to be negotiated, and still
10 remains negotiated. I'm hoping that in the adopted
11 budget, that the Council and Administration can come
12 to some sort of resolution on that funding.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Were all the MetroCards
14 distributed to providers last summer?

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay, I'm going to turn it
17 over to Chair Stevens. Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, now, it's good
20 afternoon. And I just want to just start off by
21 saying like, I'm really excited to hear the numbers
22 around the youth count. I know that was a huge
23 priority. And even when we're out there, we felt the
24 energy and the difference that was put into it. And
25 so I'm not surprised by those numbers, but I'm

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2 excited by them. And next year, really looking
3 forward to getting at least 5,000. Because you know,
4 you've hit a goal, you got to go for a new one. So
5 I'm really excited about those numbers.

6 So let's jump right into it. So the \$29.3
7 million PEGs for FY 23 November plan still includes
8 in the fiscal 2024 Executive Budget, DYCD cites less-
9 than-anticipated spending across agency contracts and
10 programs. What DYCD programs represent the less-
11 than-anticipated spending?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Good afternoon,
13 Chair Stevens. And so the programs that reflect the
14 less-than-anticipated spending are SYEP and Work,
15 Learn & Grow. And again, what we're talking about is
16 wages, not necessarily contractual spending. And so
17 no provider's budget will be impacted by this saving
18 initiative.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is DYCD's thoughts on
20 the causes of those programs underspending?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Well, the-- the
22 reasons for not accumulating the amount of hours
23 varies. Again, we have a very large initiative
24 that's across all five boroughs. And so a young
25 person may not be able to use all the hours because

2 they may be in summer school, they may be going on
3 vacations, there may be other factors that may be
4 impacting their ability to work all the hours. And
5 so, while as an agency, we encourage it, and we want
6 to give them the amount of support and enable them to
7 do it, there's sometimes challenges that they may not
8 be able to do it. And so what we wanted to do was be
9 in compliance with this PEG, but at the same time not
10 have any impact on any young person's budget as well
11 as the providers. And ultimately, if a young person
12 works additional hours, they will be paid. So while
13 we have this PEG saving, I can assure you that the
14 commitment to the city is to make sure that if more
15 people work more hours that are reflected in the
16 budget, we will ensure that they will get their
17 money.

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I guess understanding
19 exactly the nature of the way that the program runs,
20 and I know you understand it very well, sometimes
21 families go on vacation. And young people go with
22 their family on vacation. And those are the
23 situations that happen.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean, it's always a
25 number of reasons. But what are you guys doing to

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2 like maximize programs' budgets around spending and
3 making sure that they're staying on track because to
4 me, it is not okay to leave money on the table,
5 right? And so if those young people aren't able to
6 maximize it, what are we doing to ensure that we are
7 maximizing that by reaching out to additional
8 children and making sure that this money is being
9 used, so how are we working on programs to make sure
10 that they're maximizing them.

11 COMMISSIONER HOARD: So just focusing on SYEP, we
12 do have a waitlist. And we do make sure we contact
13 the family and the young people on the SYP waitlist
14 to get them in the program. But at some.in time, you
15 know, understanding that it is only a six-week
16 program, you know, that there's a viability there,
17 right?, to make sure that the program integrity is
18 also there, the kids are going to actually learn
19 something.

20 So understanding that, understanding that coupled
21 with the fact that the-- that the parents, you know,
22 are taking kids to family reunions and other things.
23 What we're doing with the providers is what we
24 traditionally do: We work with the providers to our
25 capacity building, to make sure that they understand

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2 the contract management, and we make sure that they
3 know exactly what initiatives they need to do, and
4 how we can support to make sure that the contracts
5 are being managed, and that we're maximizing the
6 revenue.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I agree. And we also
8 should anticipate, like, we know, young people aren't
9 going to show up. So then, you know, are we
10 encouraging providers to over-enroll and do those
11 things so that they can be maximized-- maximize them,
12 because we know, from numbers, that we have some of
13 the highest unemployment rates for young people. So-
14 - And this is, for me, seems like a running theme
15 throughout city agencies where we're not connecting
16 the dots, because we have vacancies. And then we
17 have a lot of people who are unemployed. But for
18 some reason, we are not able to connect the dots to
19 ensure that we're maximizing these programs and
20 getting them to the people who need them the most.

21 And so I think that we really need to make sure
22 that we're evaluating that and making sure that we're
23 getting to those who need it. Because sometimes a
24 lot-- a lot of times, young people who are at greater
25

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2 risks are not the ones in these programs. So we need
3 to do a better job at that.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I just want to take this
5 moment to talk about the special initiative, and what
6 we're doing in SYEP to address those young people
7 that are at risk. Uh, Val, do you want to talk about
8 the special issue?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER: Yeah, I think-- is this on?
10 Yeah, as you know, I think we've moved SYEP over the
11 last several years to be more and more targeted
12 towards young people who need the service the most.
13 So in our special initiatives program in particular,
14 year over year, we've grown that portfolio and done
15 special things. Like last year, we started
16 prioritizing all young people who live in NYCHA,
17 whether they apply through a NYCHA-specific contract
18 or through the lottery.

19 We have a partnership with DOE, where we target
20 youth with disabilities. We've increased that number
21 year over year, we partner with District 75, and TCAC
22 at DOE to do that. And the NYPD is a great partner
23 there as well, being an employer for a lot of those
24 young people. We work together with ACS, with DOP,
25 DHS, to target young people in one of those systems

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2 to make sure that they get priority slots, and also
3 additional resources and services to enroll in the
4 program. So everything about SYEP right now is
5 targeting those slots that we have, the resources
6 that we have towards young people who need them most.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, I agree. And I know
8 that you guys have been doing-- making great strides
9 to make sure we're reaching more and more young
10 people, and especially those who typically are not in
11 these programs, but I'm always going to push that we
12 can always do more, because there are still young
13 people who have very high unemployment.

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we heard you. And one
15 of the things that we decided to do, and Val can talk
16 about that as well, is we started doing grassroots
17 recruitment. So we went to some of our NYCHA
18 Cornerstone programs and community centers and
19 actually started recruiting on the ground.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If DYCD anticipate savings
21 for \$40 million on less-than-anticipated spending
22 over the next several years, will contracts' value--
23 value be reduced?

24 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I don't see that happening.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: When you say you don't see
3 that happening, isn't that like the trend that's
4 happening? Because we're saying that they've been
5 reduced. That's-- that's what happening?

6 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, we can't baseline the
7 historical numbers, right? So if we're looking at
8 historical numbers and understanding that there will
9 always be some savings there, knowing exactly how
10 much that savings are, will be-- you know, how do we
11 determine that?

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I mean, historically, these
13 contracts have been underspending. And so my
14 question is: Why aren't we shifting those to
15 providers that are able to provide those slots, and
16 shifting them to other programs that have longer
17 waitlists? So why aren't we looking at those things
18 to actually maximize the money in this portfolio?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So-- Hi Chair
20 Stevens. And so just to expand on what the
21 commissioner was stating: These contracts, they-- we
22 are doing accrual savings. And so as he mentioned,
23 we are not doing contractual reductions for the term
24 of these contracts as they currently exist. So I
25 want to make sure that it's clear for those listening

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2 that these are accrual savings, and they will not
3 have any impact to the contract value of these while-
4 - throughout the duration of their term. Now we--

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Nor the amount of kids.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Correct.

7 There'll be no reduction to the kids served. In
8 addition to that, I believe your question was around.
9 How do we ensure that the funds that we have certain
10 contracts are being expended appropriately? And so I
11 can assure you that in the after-school portfolio,
12 there are often contract changes to reflect less
13 enrollment, schools that are truncated, schools that
14 have closed, and those slots are then reallocated.
15 And the SYEP portfolio throughout the year, given
16 that's a six week program, there are adjustments made
17 during that port-- that program period to ensure that
18 slots are allocated in the best way possible. So we
19 are monitoring it very closely to make sure that with
20 the limited resources that we have, we are making
21 sure that it's been appropriated to the right
22 provider, and the right community to make sure that
23 that it's being expended.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That kind of didn't answer
25 the question that I asked, though, because I asked,

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2 saying like, if we have-- if we know that
3 historically, this is going to happen and thinking
4 about, like thinking ahead, and I know that even with
5 the COMPASS, that typically happens, where you'll
6 shift it, especially is a program is closing, but I'm
7 talking about if there's accruals, why are we not
8 saying like, let's shift these to the providers that
9 have longer waiting lists, and things like that, as
10 opposed to just like if a program is closing.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So Chair Stevens,
12 that's what I said. So for a provider, for example,
13 if you have a contract and you have 100 slots, you do
14 not serve 20 of them for multiple years, the team
15 does look closely to see how many programs are
16 underfunded--

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm not talking about for
18 multiple years. And that's why I think we're not
19 hearing each other. I'm not talking about for
20 multiple years. I'm talking about for that program.
21 Like, I'm not saying-- oh, obviously for over
22 multiple years, that does happen. If it's multiple
23 years, you'll say, "Hey, you're not meeting your
24 numbers year after year. We're going to shift these
25 slots to another place." Yes.

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2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: You're talking
3 about a provider that has a contract and has multiple
4 contracts and it's underspending in one area. And
5 can they move that funding to another contract with
6 the nursing providers portfolio?

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Not necessarily that
8 provider, but to another provider, because we often
9 know that there are some programs that have longer
10 waitlists during that year, and that money is just
11 sitting there. And now we're saying we're reducing
12 it, and there's no reduction in services when there
13 really is because we're not reaching the amount of
14 numbers of kids that we say that we are.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So I would also
16 want to mention that when we do the allocation, we
17 got to be mindful of PPP rules. And so money is
18 allocated by solicitation. So we just can't move
19 money from provider to provider. We have to make
20 sure that we're following all the appropriate
21 procurement rules to make sure that we stay
22 consistent to the RFP and the funds that were
23 initially allocated. So if it's a underperforming in
24 an elementary program, we got to make sure that when
25 we reallocate it, we're reallocating to another

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2 elementary program. We want to make sure that if
3 it's in a certain district, we are reallocating to
4 that same district, so that community is still
5 receiving it. So we would like to do it, but again
6 within a fiscal year, sometimes you find out later
7 that they are underperforming and funds can't move
8 that quickly. And that's why we tend-- typically try
9 to look at multiple years, because there are a number
10 of things that can impact a program's performance in
11 any given fiscal year. We don't make decisions just
12 based off of one fiscal year.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I'm aware. But I'm
14 also aware that sometimes historically, it takes
15 multiple years for that to happen. So I'm aware of
16 that as well.

17 So we're going to move on to Office of
18 Neighborhood Safety. DYCD's budget for ONS includes
19 \$840 million added to fiscal 2024, \$131 million in
20 fiscal 2025 and in the out years? Are there any
21 challenges that DYCD foresees in successfully running
22 this program?

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Challenges in terms of the
24 way that we are managing the program? Because we're
25 still going through a transition.

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2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

3 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So based upon the fact that
4 we're still going to transition, and we're in
5 communications with the Mayor's Office of Criminal
6 Justice, we're still trying to understand what those
7 challenges are, so that we can be prepared for them.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So you see-- you do foresee
9 some challenges, and that's what I'm asking.

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No, I'm saying we should be
11 prepared for the any possibilities of any challenges.
12 But right now, we're still in transition, we're still
13 having conversations with the Mayor's Office of
14 Criminal Justice.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So you don't-- you don't
16 foresee anything.

17 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So what I'm saying is that
18 those transition periods--

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's okay to foresee some
20 challenges, and that you prepare for them too. It's
21 okay.

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, we've been able to
23 adapt to other challenges that we've had in our
24 portfolio.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No one's saying that you're
3 not. We're just asking if you foresee challenges.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No. I just want to be
5 clear that those conversations are still ongoing.
6 And the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice has been
7 very upfront on exactly the transition and the
8 transition period, the issues involving the budget,
9 the issue involving programming and program areas,
10 you know. So those conversations-- but I would love
11 to read you in as soon as that program officially
12 transitions over.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. I've been
14 meeting with you guys monthly about it. So I also
15 foresee issues. And I don't know why it's such an
16 issue to say that. And it's okay. And I think that
17 you're preparing for it, but there is going to be
18 some issues and challenges. Like it's okay. Like
19 it's not a bad thing.

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I understand.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the current number
22 of contracts for these programs? Is DYCD going to
23 increase the number of contracts for these programs?

24

25

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2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yeah, I'll take
3 that question. So currently, as it's structured,
4 there are-- there aren't that many contracts, there's
5 probably less than about a dozen contracts. But
6 there are a lot of subcontracts within those. And
7 those number like up to 100. So we are definitely,
8 you know, as the Commissioner is saying, that is one
9 challenge. To your point, right? But we are
10 thankful that, you know, OMB and Mayor have agreed to
11 give us additional resources to help manage that.
12 Contracting is obviously a big concern for the City
13 as a whole. So we are getting resources we need to,
14 like, make sure that those contracts and subcontracts
15 get registered.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So you said there's 12.
17 And how many subcontractors?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: There's, uh--
19 There's somewhere between I think, 80 to 100.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If you can give me the
21 exact numbers that would be great.

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yeah. We'll
23 get you those.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Will DYCD be allocating to
25 historical groups who've been doing this work?

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2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I believe there's a-- well,
3 there's a process. And based upon the process that
4 was, I guess, established by the prime contractor,
5 which is United Way, we'll see exactly at the end of
6 the process, where the allo-- where the RFP awardees
7 and who has won and who has lost. Right now we're
8 not there yet.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hmm. Interesting. There
10 are providers that have been reaching out because
11 they have not received FY 2023 funding. Will DYCD
12 accommodate the providers that have not received
13 funding to successfully run their programs?

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So if-- if there's a
15 provider that has issues, I would really like for you
16 to refer them to me so that I can resolve those
17 issues.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Has DYCD performed any
19 evaluations? Or have evaluated-- anticipating
20 performing evaluations for these new programs coming
21 on to under the Neighborhood Safety?

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So currently, again, you
23 know, we're still transitioning with MOCJ, the
24 Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. Those are
25 questions that, you know, we will be asking in terms

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2 of evaluation and when they are and have they been
3 completed, or done? So I really don't have an answer
4 for you on that one. But I can get back to you on
5 that one.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, thank you. Summer
7 Rising: At the preliminary budget, we had the
8 opportunity to assess Summer Rising program. DYCD
9 successfully enrolled 110 elementary and middle
10 school students for programming and enhancements to
11 enrollment process, with great results. Has enroll--
12 well, I know that enrollment has begun. Do we know
13 and have total numbers? And I think you mentioned in
14 your opening around how many students are currently
15 enrolled.

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: [TO DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
17 HASKELL:] Susan?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Good afternoon. I
19 think the commissioner was speaking to-- thank you--
20 the number of applications.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Roughly 139,000
23 Summer Rising applications to date.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Great. So we're surpassing
25 numbers from last year. And I know at our last

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2 hearing, we started to talk a little bit about the
3 matching program. Could you describe a little--
4 little bit what that matching program looks like,
5 since we are changing from the first-come/first-
6 serve?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I think-- I don't
8 know if I can describe the technical details in-- in
9 detail. But I think Commissioner mentioned one of
10 the big improvements was allowing people to have
11 choice, to rank multiple choices as opposed to last
12 year when you-- you know, like you grabbed a spot and
13 it was gone. This way, we allowed as many people who
14 are interested to apply for the program. So that was
15 a huge thing.

16 Now, the city's in the-- in the process of
17 matching those young people, trying to maximize the
18 number of first choices, if not second, third, down
19 the road to make the, you know, the initial
20 enrollment decisions. So our priority areas, also as
21 the Commissioner has testified, as students in
22 temporary housing, students with disabilities,
23 students in foster care, and additionally, young
24 people who have a connection to CBO after school
25 program are being considered.

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2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Can you talk to me a little
3 bit about what the process will look like to ensure
4 that both principals and CBO providers are working
5 together collaboratively around this matching
6 process?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: The matching-- the--
8 - the criteria-- the priority areas of the matching
9 process are complete. I think the period where we
10 were working-- working really closely with CBOs, and
11 principals was during that open application to make
12 sure that families know, you know, we did local
13 outreach, we did site-based outreach to make sure
14 that everybody knew the program portal was open and
15 had an opportunity to apply.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So who will be doing the
17 matching?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: The matching is a
19 technical process. DOE is leading the algorithms
20 that will assign people to their program locations
21 based on the family choice, and the priorities to
22 make sure that of the 110,000 seats, they go to the
23 young people who apply to our most in need.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So this is going to be like
25 computerized where people are kind of just matched in

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2 the system. This isn't going to be a conversation
3 between CBO providers and the principal? So--
4 Because that just sounds like it's going to be a lot
5 of error for mistakes.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We have a
7 leadership team from DYCD, from DOE. We work really
8 closely to-- We've been-- Since day one of the
9 applications coming out to see what are the trends,
10 here are applications coming in? What do we need to
11 do to be responsive to that? I don't think there's a
12 place for local decision-making at that point. But
13 there will be as we get further along. We may have
14 seats still available, we want to make sure that CBOs
15 and principals know how to get young people into
16 available seats. It's possible somebody drops out,
17 and there's an available seat. And at that-- in that
18 way, the local process will be very, very important.

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I just want to add the
20 collaboration with not only the New York City Public
21 Schools, but with our CBOs, and specifically to
22 Susan's point, you know, localizing it so that the
23 CEOs and the principals, along with the
24 superintendents, and I'm going to add that as well,
25 because in my conversation with the Chancellor, we

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2 made sure that the superintendents were also involved
3 in the process as well. So as far as the feedback
4 that we're getting, so far, everything is going okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'll let you guys know the
6 feedback that I get, because, you know, sometimes
7 it's always conflicting.

8 So the next question I have is just around like,
9 young people with special needs. Who will be taken
10 on the lead to ensure that during the CBO time that
11 students have adequate paraprofessionals and things
12 like that on staff? Because I show that was
13 definitely one of the issues that was raised.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That is also
15 definitely a true partnership. I mean, initially,
16 CBO providers will be connected with families trying
17 to understand what accommodations young people need,
18 whether or not they need a para, they may have
19 special needs that require like a certain focus and
20 direction. CBO staff will be responsible for that.
21 DOE is communicating with families to see who
22 participating in Summer Rising may need truly
23 additional support in the form of maybe a DOE-funded
24 para. And that decision is being made with families
25 with the Special Ed team, with the Department of

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2 Education. We had-- We also have great communication
3 with DOE to escalate any situations that maybe, you
4 know, weren't predicted, or maybe it wasn't, there
5 wasn't a need that was seen. But you know, after the
6 program is running, we observed that additional
7 support is needed, and we have a process for that as
8 well.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We're just trying to look
10 like for the CBO staff around, um, students with
11 special needs? I know that was another concern where
12 a lot of folks last year said that they only got
13 virtual training and didn't feel equipped to actually
14 work with the young people in the needs that they
15 had.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I'm really excited
17 to say like professional development has kicked off
18 much of it as kicked off this week. That includes--
19 I know this was important to you like partnerships
20 between principals and CBOs--

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Forced partnership.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: --doing their
23 collaborative planning, and also workshops for staff
24 and leadership around supporting students with
25 disabilities. We also, you know, after the

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2 enrollment process we plan to convene, we will be
3 able to see, you know, sites that have high number of
4 students with disabilities may need additional
5 support, convene them, see what supports there they
6 need and we'll-- we're happy to be having robust
7 professional development this summer.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I will be remiss to not ask
9 this question that I ask every single time we talk
10 about Summer Rising: Is there going to be
11 consideration for Community Centers to receive the
12 same rate increase as Summer Rising?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Uh, I'm not aware
14 we're preparing any amendments right now for
15 Community Center funding, but we are planning
16 supports. We've got for example, I think this
17 Thursday, we're kicking off a summer meet and greet
18 for community centers and Summer Rising providers to
19 meet arts groups and other kinds of enrichment
20 activity organizations that they can partner with to
21 supplement the activities that they provide directly.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm going to beat the drum
23 that I beat every time and every hearing, I will
24 continue to do it. I do not think that we should be
25 having programs that are doing the same work making

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2 different pay. It puts programs that aren't in the
3 same agency and a very challenging a difficult place,
4 especially when staff asks to transfer to programs
5 and the same agency because they have a higher pay
6 rate. So I just-- I'm just going to always do it
7 until we fix it. So I'm going to keep beating the
8 drum.

9 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we hear you.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know. I'm going to keep
11 saying it though. So I'm going to move on to adult
12 literacy and ask a couple of questions, and then I'll
13 pass it off to committee members, and then I'll come
14 back for some more questions, because you know, I
15 have a couple of them.

16 Adult Literacy, baselining funding for adult
17 literacy: Double baseline funding for adult literacy
18 programs and the Council's response to the Mayor's
19 preliminary budget in 2023 Financial Plan, Council
20 called on the Administration to include \$13.5 million
21 to increase the baseline funding for adult literacy
22 programs to \$27 million. The increase would double
23 the level of investments per student in the upcoming
24 DYCD Request For Proposal, RFP. The executive budget
25 did not recognize any additional funding for adult

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2 literacy. Can DYCD provide a clarification on the
3 adult literacy, on the number of seats funded per the
4 current contract?

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Hi, Chair
6 Stevens. The total amount of seats per contract is
7 16,340.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry. Say that again.
9 I didn't write--

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: 16,340.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: 340. Thank you. What is
12 the current headcount for this program?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: 15,132.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How does DYCD propose to
15 address the needs for adults, New Yorkers and asylum
16 seekers?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I'm sorry, Chair
18 Stevens, I want to just provide a little bit of
19 clarification. Regarding the headcount: There are
20 five headcounts associated with this program, with
21 DYCD.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Do want to go
23 through the five?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: No. I don't have
25 that in front of me right now.

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2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. You can send that.

3 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Will do.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How does DYCD proposed to
5 address the needs for adult New Yorkers and asylum
6 seekers who desperately need the benefits of language
7 access programs?

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So we've actually been just
9 providing the adult literacy to a HERRC. And in
10 addition to that, we've provided-- I know-- I know
11 we're sticking on literacy, but I also want to
12 emphasize the investment that we made in terms of our
13 RHY programs, and in terms of providing with are CBOs
14 additional services such as legal services as well,
15 for migrants and asylum seekers, but specifically on
16 literacy, we have an investment that we're working
17 with, and we have provided literacy programs in our--
18 in the HERRC centers.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And because you
20 did bring up the RHY population, and I know there was
21 a one-time allocation of \$200,000 to one of our CBOs,
22 will that also be allocated again for next fiscal
23 year?

24 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We're currently meeting
25 with CBOs to try to understand what resources they're

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2 going to need as we're-- as we're looking at the
3 increase and monitoring the increase along with the
4 other sister agencies and City Hall on the migrant
5 situation and the influx.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the current--
7 current per-student rate for adult literacy education
8 programs?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: The rate ranges
10 between \$850 and \$950.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: I'm sorry. Say that again.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: It ranges between
13 \$850 and \$950.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does the current rate
15 adequately support the requirements and services for
16 adult literacy? And how can the Administration
17 reconcile any discrepancies?

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I think the rate
19 currently supports the viability of the programs
20 based on the requirements in the RFP. I think that
21 we are currently going through a concept paper and we
22 are evaluating the existing model and we will make
23 adjustments to the rate as we finish the concept
24 paper review process.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. DYCD recently
3 released the concept paper that included
4 approximately \$12.6 million for funding for adult
5 basic education, English speakers of other languages,
6 and high school equivalency programs. Yet the
7 executive budget only includes less than \$10-- less
8 than \$10 million for those services, just 72% of what
9 DYCD committed to in the concept paper. Why is there
10 a gap in funding, and when are we expecting OMB and
11 DYCD to add the additional \$3.5 million to cover the
12 \$12.6 million identified in the concept paper?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: The current RFP
14 budget is \$12.7. I'm not sure of the amount. I know
15 we've had some adjustments to the budget, but in
16 reflection of PEGs, but the previous PEG for adult
17 literacy was actually a revenue swap. And so the
18 baseline contract for the RFP has not substantially
19 changed. And so I'm not entirely clear of the \$3.5
20 million referring to.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's saying that the in the
22 budget currently it's only \$10 million that's
23 allocated for the RFP. So that I think that's where
24 the discrepancy is.

25

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3 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I think-- well, I
4 can follow up with you after the hearing to kind of
5 figure out how we can reconcile the differences in
6 numbers.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. The concept
8 paper increases student funding for Adult Literacy
9 from \$950 per student to \$1300 per student. The
10 current \$950 rate is established since 2014. And the
11 new \$1300 rate simply reflects the cost of living
12 adjustment. Based on the cost model budget for the
13 investment in quality report, advocates are calling
14 for the rate of no less than \$2700 per students will
15 adequately fund the resources important support
16 needed to serve Adult Literacy? How does the
17 administration plan to achieve a level of investment
18 while also proposing cutting funding for adult
19 literacy education?

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So I just want to
21 emphasize, and I'm sorry, you know, we're going to
22 keep having these conversations on the fact that the
23 City and the City's fiscal situation is still trying,
24 you know, it's still a major-- a major issue. We
25 have the migrant situation, the asylum seekers, we
have a collective bargaining agreements that we need

2 to land at. So I understand, you know, the act--
3 the, you know, the PPP wanting to be-- to land at a
4 certain level, but at this time and dealing with the
5 fiscal challenges, we don't know. We have no-- you
6 know, we understand. We hear their concerns. We
7 know exactly where they want to land. But right now,
8 \$1300 is where we are proposing in the concept
9 papers.

10 So I just want us to make sure that we're
11 understanding that if we are-- if providers are
12 saying that they need one thing, and we're not even
13 close to that, because if they're-- if it's worth
14 \$1300, and the providers saying they need \$2700 per
15 student, that's a huge discrepancy. Like, that's not
16 like a couple of dollars. And so I think we also
17 need to understand what quality of program that's
18 going to be, and what that's going to look like. And
19 so for me, yes, we are in a crisis, but we find money
20 for the things that we deem important. And so for
21 me, this is important, especially when we have an
22 influx of folks who are going to need these services.
23 So we have to make sure that we're finding a balance,
24 and we're also pushing back. And so yes, we're in a
25 financial crisis, but we're finding money for the

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2 things we think are important. And clearly, this is
3 something that the City is saying it's not important.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No, I don't think the City
5 is saying that. I think that what we need to also
6 understand is the quality of our programs. And I
7 think that the adult literacy programs and the
8 literacy programs are quality programs.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. They are
10 quality programs consists of providers are doing the
11 work. But we should also pay people what they're
12 worth. Like, it's not okay for us to say that, "Oh,
13 yeah, they're a great program." Yes, because the
14 providers are putting in extra work. They're working
15 overtime and doing the thing. So I think we have to-
16 - like that is not okay, like, that is not okay for
17 us to just like, oh, "Well, they're good programs."
18 Of course, because they're being overworked.

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Understood. Again,
20 circling back to the fiscal situation, all right?

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We find money in these
22 budgets for the things that we deem important. And
23 to me, that's saying it's not important.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Chair Stevens, I
25 just want to just elaborate that the \$1300 reflected

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2 in the concept paper is an increase from the \$950.
3 And so while it may not be at the \$2700, we are
4 substantially increasing the current price per
5 participant, and the city has released the Wage
6 Enhancement initiative. And so while it may not
7 reach to the level that the providers are asking for,
8 I think the city is trying to make an effort to, you
9 know, recognize the changes in the financial climate
10 in the city while still trying to manage the fiscal
11 obligations. We are trying.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I don't think that.
13 This is not about anyone trying. What I'm saying is,
14 if the people who are actually doing the work is
15 saying it's not enough, it is not okay for us to be
16 like, "Well, you guys figure it out." That's just
17 not okay.

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I don't think we're
19 saying that. I think I think we're basically saying
20 that we understand. We-- I've met with the, you
21 know, the providers as well, and I-- and I
22 understand. I understand where they want to land. I
23 really do.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And we should push so we
25 can get there. So I'm going to open it up now for my

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2 colleagues who have questions, and I have a few more
3 questions. We'll come back.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: We've also been joined by
5 Councilmembers Brooks-Powers, Brewer, and Ayala. The
6 first question will be from Councilman Ossé, followed
7 by Barron.

8 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you so much Chairs.
9 The executive plan calls for \$48.8 million for
10 runaway and homeless youth programs. This is \$4.5
11 million less than the fiscal year 2023 Adopted Budget
12 due to one-time funding. This committee actually
13 just had a hearing on runaway and homeless youth,
14 which talked about the dire need for new beds for
15 runaway and homeless youth. How will this reduction
16 impact this need, especially as we have more youth in
17 our shelter system due to the arrival of asylum
18 seekers?

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So I just want to add-- and
20 thanks for the question-- that in our runaway
21 homeless youth program, we have a success story, in
22 fact. One of our sites that is run by Rising Ground,
23 it just came on site. So we you know, we're at a--
24 for the 21-24 population, we're at the 60 bed, where
25 we were-- originally were in previous years. So

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2 that's-- that's a good story. The level of
3 investments that we need and-- and understanding
4 exactly where those levels of investment is-- is a
5 conversation that we're currently having with not
6 only our providers but with OMB as well.

7 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you. And at the
8 committee's last oversight hearing, and sorry to
9 bring this up again, we spoke to many advocates who
10 told us about their shelter experiences. They said
11 that as LGBTQ youth they felt discriminated against
12 by the staff at their shelter, and did not feel safe.
13 Will any of this budget for runaway and homeless
14 youth go towards specific LGBTQ runaway and homeless
15 youth initiatives? And if so, what are they?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I appreciate that
17 question. And I wanted to-- I appreciate actually
18 the opportunity to maybe add some clarification. I
19 remember the communication in that hearing. And I
20 wanted to just express like how we've had tremendous
21 growth over the last few years of our runaway and
22 homeless youth, we have about 50 residential sites,
23 we have 813 beds. And I think that they-- the Drop--
24 the drop-in centers and the residential programs are
25 widely seen as warm, welcoming spaces, in particular,

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2 providing specialized service and support for LGBTQIA
3 young people. So I feel that the-- you know, the
4 services coming through runaway and homeless youth
5 are generally reflected by young people as being very
6 supportive and warm and welcoming.

7 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Okay, and is there any money
8 in the budget that goes towards specific initiatives
9 for LGBTQ homeless youth, or...?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes, over the
11 course of the years, baselined runaway and homeless
12 youth program funding has been targeted toward
13 specialized services for LGBTQ youth. Now, it's part
14 of our baseline programming for both residential
15 programs and drop-in centers. And is part of the
16 culture, training, hiring, and staffing support that
17 is throughout the system.

18 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Okay. Thank you chairs.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Barron,
20 followed by Riley.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Commissioner,
22 you mentioned twice-- two or three times about the
23 fiscal condition of the city. And I know you're
24 parroting what the mayor has said. But there are
25 differences on that. The fiscal condition of the

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2 city. Big differences. You mentioned the asylum
3 seekers. He says \$4.3 billion we need for asylum
4 seekers, not true. \$3.1 billion-- a billion coming
5 from the state making it \$2 billion, and another \$800
6 million that's coming from the feds 1.2 billion.

7 You mentioned the union's settlement, \$4 billion.
8 Some people think that's a bloated number. And in
9 fact, there's been a \$4.1 billion unexpected revenue
10 increase. And there's \$8.3 billion in a reserve
11 account.

12 So when you speak about the fiscal condition and
13 why you can't have more money -- I understand what
14 you've got to say, working with the mayor -- it is
15 not true. Fact of the matter is, they have more
16 money than what they anticipated, which is why the
17 budget went from \$102 billion to \$106 billion. And
18 when not in the kind of crises-- that the Mayor is
19 manipulating the agencies into thinking you got to do
20 these cuts to the agencies to take care of the asylum
21 seekers. Not true. That's number one. And I
22 suggest you research it. Don't take my word, or the
23 Mayor's word. Just research it, and you'll see that
24 is not the situation. You have a Republican
25 conservative Mayor that's putting forth an austerity

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2 budget that balances the budget on cuts, as opposed
3 to-- and then they you say, PEGs. Savings. Cuts.

4 I wanted to ask you a question about the Summer
5 Youth Program. That's been a pet peeve of mine since
6 I've been in the City Council under Bloomberg and my
7 wife under de Blasio. Never do the right justice for
8 the youth in the summer. In your report, you said
9 there was 163,000 youth who applied, and you doubled
10 it: 53,000 actually got positions. Somewhere else
11 in the report it said 100,000. That's ridiculous.

12 We need jobs for our youth not just during the
13 summer, but what about the rest of the year? And how
14 much are they making over the summer? There's no
15 reason why we can't employ all of those youth that
16 apply. I want to know what would your calculation of
17 the amount of money would be for 100-- and let's just
18 say 200,000 youth because a lot of youth don't apply
19 anymore, because they never get the jobs. But let's
20 just say if it was 200,000 youth jobs over the
21 summer, how much money would that be? And do you
22 have a program for youth employment for the rest of
23 the year, beyond the two months. I'll start there
24 and stop there.

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2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay. Thank you,
3 Councilmember Barron. I just want to first make sure
4 that we-- you and I are correct on the numbers. So
5 the investment that the Mayor had made from the
6 previous Mayor was 75,000 SYEP slot to currently
7 going into the second year 100,000 young people
8 getting jobs.

9 Not only are they getting jobs, but the mayor
10 also insisted that we also institute financial
11 literacy. That was part of that whole program, which
12 has never been done before. So that's an investment.
13 And I think that sometimes we need to look at
14 programs and program investment, and then walk away
15 with a win. This 100,000 young people getting jobs,
16 working in careers, having the experience with not
17 only local community-based organizations where
18 they're working at, but also Microsoft and other
19 corporate-- corporate executives.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: For those youth, that's
21 great. But there's 100,000 youth who have nothing.
22 And when you have a city that has \$106.7 billion
23 budget and takes care of half the youth that apply, I
24 don't see that as a success, especially when it's not
25 necessary. If it was absolutely fiscally necessary,

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2 I would be on the same page with you. But I've been
3 in here for 14 years. I don't know how many budgets
4 you've been through. But I've been through 14
5 budgets. And there's always been not enough money
6 for the youth employment. They need jobs, not jail.
7 And I will guarantee you in this budget if you combed
8 it yourself, the Mayor can talk about-- de Blasio
9 bragged about the 75,000, then the Mayor says
10 100,000, Bloomberg bragged about 40,000 or 50,000.
11 But we're not taking care of our youth on that
12 employment level, no matter how many wonderful things
13 you say. And this is not a knock on you, because
14 you're strapped with whatever they fund you. But
15 just to let you know that your Mayor is shortchanging
16 you unnecessarily.

17 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I also want to
18 emphasize-- and I don't know if you heard about the
19 special initiative, which I brought Deputy
20 Commissioner Mulligan in, because I want to make sure
21 that we provide you with the correct information on
22 the targeted population that you have successfully
23 advocated for. [TO DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN:]
24 Could you talk about the special initiative?

25

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: No. Before we go to that,
3 I just want to stay with the summer youth.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Sure. That's what we're
5 going to talk about, [crosstalk][inaudible] the
6 issues.

7 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: But I'm saying adjust the
8 amount of slots.

9 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mm-hmm.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: The 100,000 is woefully
11 inadequate adequate for the youth that are going to
12 need jobs this summer. Because when the sun comes
13 out, unfortunately, the guns come out, violence goes
14 up, and we need to address it more seriously. I'm
15 not concerned about that part of it, just the number
16 of slots available. Is there something that can be
17 done? 100,000 seems a lot when you compare it to
18 other years, but when you compare it to the need, it
19 is woefully inadequate.

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And you mentioned gun
21 violence. And I just want to emphasize that the
22 increase from 75,000 to 100,000, the Mayor's
23 investment was specifically based upon the Mayor's
24 blueprint to end gun violence.

25

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Yeah. But that's not
3 going to end it if you have 100,000 youth who are not
4 going to receive jobs when you have money for them to
5 receive jobs. That's I'm trying to get across to
6 you. I know you got to come and defend the Mayor,
7 and all of that. But the bottom line, those are
8 flowery words at these hearings, but I live in East
9 New York, and I know--

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we've been to East New
11 York--

12 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: I know. I got you.

13 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we recruited in your
14 neighborhood.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: I know you did. Not
16 enough. A.T. Mitchell?

17 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes, sir. xxx

18 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: One of my proteges. Just-
19 - We work hard. He does work. Even those programs
20 are challenged. I wanted to ask you that, and then
21 I'll stop. The reimbursement: It's not working.
22 It's not working at all. I have a bill in now. And
23 I wonder if you would support it, to say that we need
24 to end the reimbursement, particularly for black and
25 brown not-for-profits who don't have the money to

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2 sell out the initial money and they get reimbursed.

3 My bill will say that they should get their allotment

4 and have to turn in receipts and all of that to be

5 accountable for it. And then it should be expedited

6 through the Comptroller's office. But only rich--

7 not rich but well-off, white not-for-profits benefit

8 from reimbursement. Not-- the very people you're

9 talking about. A.T. Mitchell and all of them, they

10 are suffering, because they've got to have upfront

11 money. In order to get \$50,000 or a million they got

12 to have the upfront money. If they don't, they can't

13 even spend it, then they got to get bridge loans, and

14 that becomes a real problem. So I know the mayor is

15 talking all that stuff, appointing people, and even

16 those programs are underfunded. In a robust economy,

17 trust me it's not-- it's not what you think.

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I would love to sit down

19 and hear your thoughts--

20 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: I'd love to.

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Councilmember Barron. I

22 would love to. And I was at the same event with Man

23 Up at the community center with you. And I hear you.

24 I would love to sit down and hear your thoughts.

25 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: You got it.

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2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Riley.

4 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: Thank you Chair Brannan,
5 Chair Stevens. And thank you to the Administration,
6 Commissioner Howard, it is great to see you today, my
7 brother. Just a few questions: The Council's
8 recommendation for adult literacy and continuing
9 education funding was based on essential needs. I
10 can specifically cite in my district as an example of
11 a large immigrant population of everyday New Yorkers
12 with diverse experiences and backgrounds, many of
13 which are looking to grow in these professional
14 fields and programs, and whom have shared the
15 benefits of classes they have received.

16 When enrolling these programs, they also gain
17 access to other resources and structural knowledge,
18 and my staff have received constituent service
19 referrals from service providers. These programs
20 invest in the whole person. Furthermore, we are
21 facing a staffing shortage in our city administration
22 services, and it would be cost-effective to provide
23 such supportive training and investment. So my
24 questions are-- my question is, excuse me, what are
25 the plans to increase adult literacy and shore up our

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2 workforce needs, taken into consideration that \$0 was
3 allocated to expand the adult literacy and executive
4 budget?

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So again, and I think
6 Nevita Bailey mentioned, that we did increase the PPP
7 in our concept paper. We went from \$950 to \$1300.
8 We understand that we need to continue to talk with
9 OMB, we need to continue to talk with our community
10 based organizations, we need to continue to talk with
11 the Council on exactly where we need-- and where the
12 actual-- where the actual line of communications and
13 the gaps in communications need to be shored up.
14 Because, to be quite honest, if the community-based
15 organizations are telling us it's not enough, we hear
16 you. We understand that. But we have increased and
17 we did show an increase in the PPP.

18 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: You said \$950 to \$1300?

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: \$950 to \$1300.

20 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Commissioner.

21 Considering that the expansion and development of the
22 Work, Learn & Grow has not been funded, what plan
23 does this Administration have to ensure that New York
24 City students in need have a place to receive college

25

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2 readiness skills, internship opportunities, and
3 career explorations.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Great question.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Thanks for that
6 question. You know, right now we have funding for
7 2000 slots for Work, Learn & Grow. We're really
8 grateful that that funding was baselined, and we are
9 focused on making sure that those slots are as high-
10 quality as they can be. We've built a really amazing
11 partnership with CUNY, so students through that
12 program will be able to participate in a CUNY course.
13 Last year for the first time, since we developed this
14 model, we expanded that program to our special
15 initiatives population that I was talking about
16 earlier. We're really proud of that as well. So you
17 know, right now we're working with the 2000 slots we
18 have to make sure that they're really successful this
19 year.

20 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Earlier this
21 year, the news broke out about a change in policy for
22 DYCD overnight drop-in centers for despite no longer
23 allowing youth people to utilize cots while awaiting
24 a bed at the city's numbers of youth shelter beds.
25 They expose-- excuse me. This exposed a significant

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2 service gap and disempowered compassionate provides
3 for providing stop-gap services. As we worked in
4 negotiating strategies to address this lack of
5 support, it is even more deeply concerning to hear
6 that the Executive Budget does not have funding
7 outlined to mean-- meaningfully scale up the
8 services. The Council has been soliciting the
9 Administration's support for \$6.3 million in
10 baselined funding to provide 40 additional beds and
11 staffing for housing, navigation, and peer services.
12 Is there any particular reason that this funding was
13 not included? And what does DYCD plan to provide as
14 an alternative for crucial housing and safety
15 services?

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: The overall goal is always
17 stable housing, right? That's the overall goal. We
18 have-- and I just want to re emphasize, because I did
19 mention this before: That we had a provider that
20 just came on board. So now there has been, and we've
21 scaled up to where we should have been and where we
22 are at, which is 60 beds for young people 21 to 24.
23 We are in communications with OMB trying to
24 understand exactly where we need to provide, and what
25 the funding looks like, you know, for additional--

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2 additional beds. So we are in talks with OMB. Those
3 are conversations that are ongoing.

4 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Commissioner.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry, I have-- I have
6 a quick question to follow up on member-- on
7 Councilmember Riley. So at the April 24th hearing,
8 we know that 15 beds were taken offline, and we're at
9 45. Were those 15 beds put back online yet?

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: That's what I'm referring
13 to.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So we're at our full 60...?

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We're at full 60. Yes.

16 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: Just evens. Can I just
17 have two more questions?

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Of course.

19 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Summer Rising.
20 I'm sorry, I stepped out, so I don't know if Chair
21 Stevens asked this question.

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Sure.

23 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: But last year, I did have a
24 concern about the lack of space outside for students
25 to have open space to utilize, because a lot of the

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2 schools they were renovating. I did see in-- this
3 year in my district, per se, that school-- some
4 programs were moved to other schools that had outdoor
5 space. Was that your solution of how DYCD addressed
6 this issue? And did you guys do a citywide?

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I'm going to take credit
8 for it, but I'll let Susan-- [LAUGHS]

9 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: I think I'll take credit,
10 because I'm the one that mentioned it last year.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Absolutely. We did
12 get-- um, can you hear me? We did get a question
13 earlier about the locations, and all of that is taken
14 into consideration: Good outdoor recreation space,
15 adequate space to have young people in schools,
16 sharing cafeterias, computer labs, theater spaces.
17 So yeah, absolutely that's-- that's a priority. And
18 if you hear anything in your community-- I know
19 you've had personal experiences. We'd love to hear
20 about it.

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I'll share the credit
22 with you, Councilmember, because when I went to your
23 office, that's one of the things that you mentioned.

24 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Commissioner
25 Howard. And just two last things: Summer Night

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2 Lights-- uh, not Summer Night Lights-- Saturday Night
3 Lights. Saturday Night Lights: Is there any plan on
4 expanding the program to include swimming programs?

5 I know certain sites, like in my district, the YMCA
6 is a Saturday Night Light program, but they just have
7 like basketball and other programs. Is-- Is there
8 any talks about expanding swimming programs for
9 Saturday Night Lights?

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I'm going to bring up
11 Deputy Commissioner Rattray to talk about that.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's your favorite topic.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Good afternoon,
14 Councilmember Riley.

15 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: How you doing, Darryl?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: That is an amazing
17 idea. I think we-- right now there are no plans to
18 expand into swimming. But it's something that we
19 could definitely talk about offline, take a look into
20 and see if we can run a pilot.

21 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: All right. And give the
22 credit to me when you do, okay?

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: While we're expanding, make
24 sure we add an evaluation component to it as well.
25 Because we should stop expanding programs if we don't

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2 have evaluations to ensure that they are actually
3 doing what we want them to do, and having goals
4 around them.

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Noted.

6 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: And lastly, the Beacon
7 Programs within my community: Commissioner, I just
8 want to make sure that we're following up with that.
9 The capacity space for the Beacon Programs that are
10 inside of the schools. I am just making sure that we
11 are allowing the beacon programs to have that. So I
12 just want to follow up with you on that.

13 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yeah, we have a meeting on
14 the books with the with the superintendent in your
15 district to make sure that those programs not only
16 have adequate access, but that they can be right-
17 sized, to make sure that those programs are
18 functioning, and that the New York City Public
19 Schools, is also-- as a value partner, is working
20 closely with the CBOs to make-- that random beacon
21 program to make sure that we have no issues.

22 COUNCILMEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Commissioner.
23 Thank you to your team, too. Thank you, Chairs.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Louis,
25 followed by Ayala.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chairs. Nice to
3 meet you, Commissioner. Thank you so much to the
4 whole team. All right. Lots of questions. All
5 right. The first one was is in regards to a
6 financial literacy program that we've-- we've heard
7 in Committee. We have a bill right now asking for
8 DYCD to require-- to provide financial literacy
9 training for youth, especially homeless youth. So I
10 wanted to know in this executive budget, were there--
11 are there any funds included to start a pilot program
12 for financial literacy for youth?

13 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Good question,
14 Councilmember. They actually is a financial literacy
15 component in our Runaway Homeless Youth Program. And
16 not only is it in our program, but it has been an
17 investment that the Mayor made sure that we have in
18 not only the SYP, but other program areas as well.
19 And I really want to emphasize and just shine light
20 on the Department of Consumer And Workers Protection,
21 because They also provide financial literacy programs
22 as well.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: So I just want to share
24 with you, we had a hearing-- Chair Stevens had a
25 hearing last month, and we heard from youth that said

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2 that the program was not successful and not helpful.

3 So you may want to think about having a conversation
4 with some of your sites about this particular
5 program, and maybe consider what our bill is
6 providing as a as a second option.

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I would love to hear
8 feedback on-- on what, you know, the young people
9 have been saying-- telling you about your success in
10 the program, and where there's program gaps.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Thank you. And hopefully
12 you can include those funds in the Executive Budget.
13 I have a quick question about ONS. So now that DYCD
14 will inherit ONS at \$184 million. I don't know about
15 other members, but for me, the coordination with Cure
16 Violence Sites has been unsuccessful. And I wanted
17 to know: Is DYCD going to increase the number of
18 contracts for these programs?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Sure, I'll take that.
20 Thank you for the question. And I think, to answer
21 the first part, I think part of the reason why it's--
22 they moved over to DYCD is that we do have-- we can
23 connect. We can make those connections for those
24 groups, because of all the different CBOs that we
25 work with, and having programs in every district.

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2 I think with regards to the-- expanding that,
3 there is right now a-- well, there's a-- there was an
4 RFP that was released. So we are pending the results
5 of that. It does look like that's the-- there will
6 be an expansion, but we don't have that released yet.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: So that was going to be my
8 next question. There was an RFP that was released in
9 2021 for FY 22 for additional providers under CMS. I
10 wanted to know these particular groups would be
11 considered in the new Executive Budget that's being
12 put out, only because some of them haven't been able
13 to either scale, or don't have the capacity to
14 provide the services.

15 And then I do have another question about
16 Saturday Night Lights. Many of our members here,
17 Councilmember Riley being one of them, have Saturday
18 Night Lights in their district. And I find that we
19 ourselves have to talk to our providers about
20 restructuring the program. Like in my district,
21 we've included golf, tennis, in addition to
22 basketball. Councilmember Riley is going to add
23 swimming. I'm going to give him his credit for that.

24 I wanted to know if this is something that you
25 all are considering for the Executive Budget, and how

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2 much additional funds do you think would have to be
3 added in order to provide a myriad of programs under
4 Saturday Night Lights?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: I can only answer--
6 I'll answer the first part, which was your ONS
7 question regarding the FY 21 RFP. So those groups
8 who applied, they are still being considered. So
9 they're part of this process of when we finalize the
10 awards. They are-- They are under consideration as
11 well.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: When are we going to hear
13 back about that? Because we've been waiting close to
14 two years.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Very soon, we hope.
16 Right. Yeah. I mean, we expect-- we are-- we're
17 hoping those contracts will start, you know, July 1.
18 So we expect to finalize this in the next-- in a
19 matter of days.

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we have a high level of
21 confidence that we're going to be able to maintain a
22 continuity of service.

23 COMMISSIONER LOUIS: Thank you. And regarding
24 the expansion of Saturday Night Lights?

25

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2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So I think when we talk
3 about programs, right?, we have to make sure that the
4 programs to Councilmember Riley, and to Council-- to
5 you, Councilmember, to your point, have enriching
6 programs that are going to attract young people. And
7 I think when we sit down and talk with our community-
8 based organizations that are running those programs,
9 if you know of and you-- you can discuss with us
10 exactly what your district and what those young
11 people would like to see, we would love to hear.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: We also need to know from
13 your agency the evaluation component that Chair
14 Stevens mentioned. I think that's really important
15 for us to include.

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes. The chair made it
17 very clear.

18 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chairs.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Ayala
20 followed by Carr.

21 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: Thank you, Chair Brannan.
22 I have two questions. One is regarding the Summer
23 Rising Program. Do migrant families qualify for
24 Summer Rising, and if so do those-- do they get
25

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2 priority as a result of their temporary housing
3 status?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes to both. Yes,
5 they do. Yes, they do.

6 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: Okay. Perfect. Thank you
7 so much for that. And regarding the contracts: I
8 know that Councilmember Stevens asked earlier but I
9 don't believe that we got a thorough response.

10 Regarding the contract payout backlogs: Obviously,
11 you know, as stated before, providers are saying that
12 there's not enough contracting staff. How are you
13 addressing this internally?

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Are you referring to
15 provider staff? Or--

16 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: No. No. I'm referring to--
17 -

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: -or staff within DYCD?

19 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: Yes. Yes.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: So thank you for that
21 question. I may have fumbled a little bit earlier in
22 the answer, but I did want to basically provide some
23 more background to this. So coming into this year,
24 DYCD, like a lot of other city agencies lost a lot of
25 staff. And our attrition rate was probably over 2%.

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2 Since January, the attrition rate for our agency has
3 been hovering around 1%, which is a lot better. And
4 I know that Councilmember Brannan had asked, and made
5 a point that we only were able to add one additional
6 head, but we were able to stop the flow of people
7 leaving, or at least offset that. So right now, our
8 total agency headcount is 530-- I mean, 517, of which
9 we have 479 on board, and we are making a press to
10 hire on those remaining heads. So right now, we
11 already have about a dozen or more people who are in
12 the pipeline to be onboarded in the next couple of
13 weeks.

14 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: How many of those are
15 specifically addressing the contract issue?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: I don't have that
17 exact number, but we can get back to you on that.

18 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: I appreciate it.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Hi. Hi Chair.
20 This is Nevita. I just want to expand that DYCD over
21 the last year has been a lot of effort to improve our
22 contracting and registration for our providers. I'm
23 proud to say that in FY 20, for continuation you
24 about 650 contracts that needed to get registered.
25 We sent out about 90% to providers. And so we're

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2 doing everything that we can to ensure that we can
3 get these contracts registered on time.

4 Additionally, we had the allowance amendment,
5 over 1000 contracts, we have about 90% registered
6 already. I think only 500 are left that need to get
7 registered. So we are making a lot of efforts
8 internally to streamline and synthesize and figure
9 out ways to improve our processes and create
10 efficiencies so that providers can get paid on time.
11 And as Chair-- Councilmember Barron mentioned earlier
12 regarding reimbursement, DYCD also initiated 25%
13 advance to every contract. We don't begin recovery
14 until January. So ultimately, for providers
15 submitting invoices timely throughout the year, by
16 January, they have 75% of their contract available,
17 even though in theory, they could only 50% of
18 expenses. So as a city, we're doing everything that
19 we can to ensure that there is cash flow available,
20 and we're trying to get contracts registered.

21 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: No. I appreciate that.

22 Because I'm sure that you've heard other nonprofit
23 groups complain about the same thing. And, you know,
24 they've shared stories with us about having to, you
25 know, seek out grants and loans, to be able to pay

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2 staff and to be able to meet their, you know, their
3 mandate. So, you know, it's obviously something
4 that-- You know, I get it, like every city agency is
5 really going through it this year. It's been a
6 really rough ride. And I appreciate your
7 participation and the DCAS hiring holds. I think
8 that those are going to, you know, those are great
9 and offer us an opportunity to really hire up
10 citywide, but this is really-- it's essential that we
11 pay our providers, you know, as quickly as we can.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Councilmember Carr?

14 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Thank you Chair Stevens.

15 Commissioner, I wonder which of us was more surprised
16 to learn you serve in a Republican administration
17 today, based on earlier questions. It probably was
18 me based on this year's budget.

19 But I just wanted to focus a little bit on the
20 Staten Island perspective. I had written to you, and
21 we exchanged correspondence on the Adult Literacy
22 Concept Paper, and I shared my concerns about whether
23 or not it was going to effectively serve Staten
24 Island. And when I say that, I mean specifically
25 that the Staten Island portion of those expenditures

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2 would be administered by Staten Island, not for
3 profits. I think all my colleagues share the view
4 that local providers know their neighborhoods best.
5 And so I was just wondering if you could just relate
6 a little bit more about how that situation has
7 evolved since December, when I last heard from you
8 about it.

9 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I'm just going to bring
10 Mike Bobbitt, the Deputy Commissioner here, because
11 when you and I corresponded, and my communication to
12 the team, it was very, very clear to make sure that
13 Staten Island is represented, especially when it
14 comes to adult literacy. So he can talk about
15 exactly what we what we have done.

16 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Thank you.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Thank you,
18 Commissioner and thank you for the question and
19 Councilmember. So following up from what
20 Commissioner Howard has expressed since the concept
21 paper was released, and we articulated an equitable
22 funding formula, we have made some revisions to the
23 way we think about that equitable formula-- equitable
24 funding formula. And so there will be representation
25 across all five boroughs, which will be then

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2 articulated around when we do release the actual RFP.

3 And we understand and appreciate what you and other
4 advocates have said about representation.

5 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: I appreciate that. And when
6 is the RFP likely to be released?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Later this summer.

8 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Okay, great. And so I-- you
9 know, again, and I share that that view and concern
10 across the RFP process--

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we heard you.

12 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: --and I appreciate your--
13 your hearing me on this one.

14 My other question is about, you know, we talked a
15 little bit earlier with your earlier answers,
16 reimbursements for providers. DYCD does a great many
17 contracts with local not-for-profits, many of them
18 are all volunteer institutions. And the back-and-
19 forth paperwork from grants, from councilmember
20 offices often take a long time. So I was wondering
21 if you could kind of elaborate on maybe what's
22 changed since your tenure began about how you're
23 trying to do that processing better? And I know
24 you're not the only piece of this. MOCS has its
25

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2 share of this process as well. But I'd love to hear
3 from you your perspective

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And thank you. It's a good
5 question. So when I got appointed, one of the first
6 things that I-- I instructed the First Deputy
7 Commissioner to do is to bring in an independent firm
8 to do a soup-to-nuts review of our contracting
9 process to make sure that we're looking at areas in--
10 which are creating barriers for our community-based
11 organizations, barriers that are not rested in, you
12 know, in law, or statute, but barriers that we have
13 put, and it's creating financial gridlock.

14 So we have successfully been going through that
15 review. And we've been making changes in our
16 contracting process. And I can honestly tell you
17 that providers are going to be able to see, you know,
18 a better streamline, to be sure that their contracts
19 are getting registered on time, and then they're
20 getting payment on time as well.

21 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Can you just elaborate a
22 little bit on the partnership with MOCS in terms of
23 that part of this, like, how you feel about that's
24 going once you kind of hand the baton off to them,
25

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2 and if you feel like there's some more sort of
3 downstream improvements that are required?

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So we are-- and I just want
5 to emphasize, and just excuse me to just veer a
6 little bit to say that the Mayor had made sure that
7 all city agencies are not working in silos. And one
8 of the excellent relationships that we have is with
9 MOCS, Lisa Flores. So we're constantly on the phone,
10 just exchanging ideas and understanding exactly how
11 to better connect, and how better to, you know,
12 connect our resources to ensure that contracts, and
13 providers are getting the things that they need, you
14 know? So I would say, the relationship has gotten
15 better, the interconnection has gotten better, and
16 the communication and the streamlining has gotten
17 better.

18 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: That's good to hear. Thank
19 you. Thank you Chairs.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would like to acknowledge
21 Councilmember Won, who just joined us, and
22 Councilmember Brewer?

23 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. And
24 I just want you to know that last year, we had a
25 great summer youth employment program student and we

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2 hired her, and she's running the district office. So
3 it works. That's why we need more.

4 And I also wanted to say in terms of financial
5 literacy, I know you have many programs, but the best
6 financial literacy program in the city of New York is
7 World Of Money. And if you don't know them, then you
8 should talk to Sabrina Lamb, and work with her, I
9 would just get rid of all the rest of them. I'm
10 sorry.

11 I am interested-- And also you're doing a great
12 job at the HERRCs. But I think everybody's
13 interested in this financial literacy. Um, you're
14 hearing it from many people. So just so I understand
15 it: So you're saying-- and it's great about the
16 concept paper. So you have \$12-point-- I think that
17 \$6 it was in the concept paper and needed, \$9.1 has
18 been allocated. So that's not the full amount. How
19 do you advocate yourself? We can do the same for the
20 balance. And then I know it's good to go from \$950
21 to \$1300, but it was much higher I think \$2700 or
22 something to that effect.

23 Financial literacy: 2.2 million New Yorkers--
24 New Yorkers-- adult New Yorkers need basic education
25 and we're only doing 4% with the programs that we

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2 have, and of course, we have 60,000 people who are
3 here who need financial literacy. So are you-- how
4 do you go about advocating for that? Or even just
5 trying to get the \$3-million-and-change to be part of
6 the concept paper and to get that out the door? I
7 know what OMB is like? I've been around even longer
8 than Barron. So I get it. I've heard this
9 conversation. Like, I can do it in my sleep. But
10 how do-- All your programs are good? Do you need
11 more money for everything? I'm the first to say
12 that. But financial literacy right now, we-- What
13 are we doing?

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So I just-- and I'll have
15 Chief Financial Officer Nevita, answer the budget
16 question for you. But in terms of programs and
17 across program areas, I can honestly tell you, that
18 is a high priority of the Mayor, to make sure--

19 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Yeah, we can put money
20 there.

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: --to make sure that
22 financial literacy is across program areas. So here
23 are two things that are happening. One is with young
24 our people in our Summer Youth Employment Program,
25 every young people that goes through that program is-

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2 - has a financial literacy component. And they're
3 engaged with our CBOs on financial literacy. Through
4 our runaway homeless youth program: financial
5 literacy. Now, what you're going to be seen in some
6 of the new RFPs are two things: One is in terms of
7 mental health across the board, and those components
8 that are-- or those populations that we feel that
9 needs to have an investment in financial literacy,
10 you'll see that in our concept paper, too.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: think that's all great.
12 Quality counts as much as the program though. So I'd
13 like to hear more about that, because Councilmember
14 Louis said it wasn't good. I'm just saying.

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I want to hear-- I want
16 to hear--

17 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: What she has to say.

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: --where those program gaps
19 are.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. What about my
21 literacy money? \$3.5.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So you first
23 mentioned \$3.5, and I know that was mentioned
24 earlier, and I think that--

25

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: It was, and I was here,
3 but I want to emphasize it. Go ahead.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Understood. And
5 so I think that throughout this year, there's been
6 one reduction to the literacy program, and that was
7 in the November PEG, I believe, it was around \$2.2
8 million. And a portion of that was a revenue swap.
9 And so we have not made the appropriate technical
10 adjustments reflected in the budget. So the budget
11 is a little bit understated. But ultimately, there's
12 not a substantial difference in the funding for the
13 adult literacy program. So I think what I said
14 earlier was that I think we can talk offline about
15 the differences and kind of reconcile the
16 differences, but it's not a \$3.5 million--

17 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I mean, we need more money
18 for literacy, though. It's not even what you
19 suggested in the concept paper, and adequate. You
20 know that. I can say it. Maybe you can't, because
21 OMB is always hovering. But I-- This is a huge need.
22 It's almost catastrophic as we sit here today. I
23 mean, I hate to think what your waiting lists are. I
24 know what they are in my neighborhood.

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2 So-- You want to add something, because I have
3 another question?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah, I wanted to
5 add something quickly about the financial literacy
6 because it's come up twice.

7 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: World Of Money.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: At the hearing that
9 Chair Stevens convened last month, we heard from
10 young people who are members of the Youth Action
11 Board, young people with lived expertise. They
12 participated in a stakeholder engagement process for
13 RHY that resulted in the financial literacy
14 initiative that we launched this year with DCW, a
15 high-quality financial literacy program. So I think
16 while they were reflecting on their experience, their
17 past experiences, they also should have been taking
18 credit for the for the good program that has launched
19 and I just wanted to clarify that feedback about the
20 program. It wasn't about the program we launched.
21 Okay, congratulations.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry. I have a
23 question, just to follow up around the literacy.
24 Wasn't that a one-year pilot program that was going
25

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2 on? Has that money been allocated for this year as
3 well?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That-- That program
5 is still operating right now.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I know. But isn't--
7 wasn't that a pilot program that we're talking about
8 at the drop-- drop-in centers that you're referring
9 to? It's one year. So has that might have been put
10 in the budget for following years? So it's just a
11 one year program currently.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Currently, it's
13 fitted for one year, we're still in ongoing
14 conversations with OMB regarding outyear funding.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, I just wanted to make
16 sure because we're touting it as a great, successful
17 program. But I just want it to be clear that that
18 program is only a one-year program, and we have not
19 had any money allocated for it to continue.

20 COMMISSIONER OHWARD: But one of the things that
21 I do want to emphasize is the work with the
22 Department of Consumer and Workers Protection who is
23 also supplementing and working with us and the
24 population that we just talked about to make sure
25 that--

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2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely, and I think
3 everyone thinks it's a great program, but there's no
4 money allocated for it currently to continue. So
5 want to make sure that is clear.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I have two other quick
7 questions: One is on evaluation. I know it came up
8 earlier. Not now, but can you give to us at some
9 point the programs that you evaluate how you go about
10 them? I'm not-- I'm talking about outside
11 evaluators. Not, you know, internal. And I assume
12 you do some of that, particularly with your new
13 Neighborhood-- Office of Neighborhood Safety. Are
14 you doing evaluations like with CUNY or academics in
15 any way?

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We've had conversations
17 with some of the academic-- academic partners, like
18 John Jay and Vera to see exactly how an evaluation
19 process would look.

20 COME BREWER: Okay. Um, because I think that's
21 important with a new program, but particularly with
22 that part grant, we're so concerned about the
23 outcome. So you'll keep us up to date on that?

24 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes.
25

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then NYCHA. So
3 long story short, I took the money that the speaker
4 kindly gave every councilmember going door-to-door at
5 NYCHA in my district, opened up the community center,
6 and now it's open seven days a week. That's what
7 every NYCHA community center needs to be. And I
8 think it's under your purview. Obviously NYCHA is up
9 here, but you fund the programs. Are you doing that?

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We do--

11 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I mean, every single NYCHA
12 community center, to be reviewed on a spreadsheet,
13 DIS, programing in there and evaluation seven days a
14 week.

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We have an amazing program
16 staff that goes out and evaluates the programs.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: But they're not doing it.
18 I can tell you. I know Manhattan, I know every blade
19 of grass in the borough Manhattan.

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: If there--

21 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: They're not open seven
22 days a week.

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: If there are issues and
24 their services that that we need to also consider I
25 would love to talk to you about it.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay, thank you. You will
3 hear for me.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember RICHARDSON
7 JORDAN, followed by Avilés.

8 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay, thank you
9 for the work that you do. I wanted to ask about a
10 couple of things. The first is around the Office of
11 Neighborhood Safety. I wanted to know in that space,
12 how closely is DYCD going to work with NYPD?

13 COUNCILMEMBER HOWARD: NYPD is a valued partner.
14 They will continue to be a valued partner. We work
15 with NYPD now and SYEP, in fact, and in Saturday
16 Night-- Saturday Night Lights. And in fact, I can
17 honestly tell you and we got to give real credit to
18 NYPD, this year they doing another record number of
19 having young people in precincts, and they're up to
20 1002. I want to make sure we are clear on that, 1002
21 young people that are going to be working in
22 precincts. And in the commissioners-- wherever the
23 commissioner designates in the summer programs. Our
24 Saturday Night Light program, as you know, is a joint
25 program with-- with NYPD. So I think that NYPD is a

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2 valuable partner. And yes, as we're looking at
3 neighborhood safety, we will be having, and we will
4 continue to have those conversations with NYPD.

5 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: And so can I-
6 can I ask what portion of the budget is going towards
7 that?

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Going towards...?

9 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: The-- Yeah, the
10 ONS?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: The ONS budget
12 for FY 24 will be \$184 million. And that was what we
13 received from the Executive Plan.

14 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. And then
15 do you-- do you know what it would cost? This-- It
16 could be a rough estimate for us to be able to offer
17 a jobs guarantee for the youth of the city?

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Could you be more specific,
19 please?

20 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: If we were to
21 offer a jobs guarantee for the youth of New York
22 City? Do you have a sense of what that would cost?

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So are you referring to
24 outside of the summer programming?

25 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Yes.

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: You can talking
3 about Work, Learn & Grow? Or expanding SYEP?

4 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Yes. Oh, no.
5 Work, Learn & Grow. The year-round-- The year-round
6 version. Yeah.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yeah. So can't
8 speak to the budget. We can just speak to what we do
9 in program, which is, you know, as the budget comes
10 to us, we're prepared and are always working with our
11 providers to make sure we're prepared to absorb
12 whatever budget we get to be able to serve young
13 people. So I think the number question is a budget
14 question, though.

15 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. Do you--
16 Do you know, the numbers of-- of how many youth have
17 applied for the-- the year-round version? The Work,
18 Learn & Grow?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So unlike SYEP,
20 Work, Learn & Grow, doesn't have a large public
21 application. So young people are directly recruited
22 from SYEP by their providers into the Work, Learn &
23 Grow program. So that's-- it's not a number that we
24 have.

25

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2 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Yeah. So we
3 wouldn't necessarily know how many youth. How much
4 of the budget is on the Work, Learn & Grow?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Right now, our
6 baseline budget is-- I want to say-- Devita help me
7 out, is \$9.7 million for about 2000 slots in the
8 baseline.

9 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. Thank
10 you.

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Avilés by
13 Brooks-Powers.

14 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you Chairs. Thank
15 you for being here. I have a couple of distinct
16 questions. In terms of the one-year pilot for the
17 financial literacy. What-- What is the full cost of
18 that pilot and how many young people does it serve?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: The pilot for the
20 Financial Literacy and Peer Navigators, the total
21 amount is \$2.9 million.

22 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: And how many young people
23 is it expected to serve?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I think it's the
25 amount of kids who come to this program. Susan speak

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2 to that. But the funding primarily supports staff at
3 those sites.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: About 3200 young
5 people through workshops, individual coaching, and
6 other kinds of activities.

7 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Great, so-- and while the
8 Mayor seems to be behind the financial literacy
9 program, we don't actually see a clear allocation for
10 it in the-- in the budget, for the fiscal 24 budget,
11 is that correct?

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So we have financial
13 literacy in the SYEP program, we have financial
14 literacy in our RHY program, and we have a financial
15 literacy in all-- in most of our program areas.

16 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Right. But for this
17 particular pilot program that we just discussed, was
18 exceptional, and wanted to continue. Is this not--
19 this \$2.9 million is not in the projected budget
20 moving forward?

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So I think those are still
22 ongoing conversations with OMB.

23 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Okay, in terms of-- I--
24 Forgive me. We have to return to the adult literacy.
25 Clearly, I have to underline all my colleagues who

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2 have said how critical this funding is. I'm having a
3 really hard time understanding how there are no
4 program cuts. How a concept paper is trying to meet
5 halfway, we know it's clear that it's not at the full
6 tilt, which we know we need, \$2700. Yet the numbers
7 do not reflect that. So we have a concept paper that
8 is agreeing to a \$1300 rate, and yet the executive
9 budget numbers do not reflect that at all. So I'm
10 having a hard time understanding how the program is
11 not impacted when the money to actually implement
12 that program is not visible. So can you-- can you--
13 I don't know why I'm missing it. But, um, there's a
14 disconnect.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: So there was a
16 \$2.2 million PEG reflected in the November plan
17 that's reflected in the budget, about \$1.7-- and I
18 can get the specific number if you really need it--
19 but it's about \$1.7. That's a revenue swap. That
20 revenue swap has not been actualized yet. So that is
21 what you cannot see. And so that's the two-- there
22 is-- you can't see the \$3.5. But it was a PEG that
23 was reflected in the budget from the November plan.
24 The difference-- The differences you're talking about
25 is the underspending, the accrual savings that's

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2 reflected in the PEG. So there's not been a
3 substantial reduction to the concept paper. DYCD
4 remains committed to the \$1300 PPP reflected in the
5 concept paper. I understand that providers have
6 advocated for \$2700. At this time, the funding that
7 we have available supports the \$1300 PPP. And we
8 will continue to hear feedback. But you know, we can
9 only move forward the funding that's available. But
10 there has not been any substantial change to the
11 funding that we have committed to the concept paper.
12 And we remain committed to what is in there.

13 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: So the-- So the-- In terms
14 of, I guess the numbers that we have, we have the
15 adult literacy in one document, decreasing \$15
16 million. And I have in another document, a
17 significantly more number. We seem to have a problem
18 of OMB, DYCD, and the Executive Budget numbers all
19 looking different.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I want to remind
21 Councilmember Avilés that the number of funding that
22 we received this year was from the City Council. So
23 there's about \$13 million, I think \$6.7, and then I
24 think in a previous plan is about \$10 million, \$5
25 million for language line, additional \$5 million for

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2 slots, \$6.7. So some of the gap that you're seeing
3 reflected in that that's Council funding that came in
4 a prior year, and is not necessarily funded with the
5 baseline budget.

6 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: So from the modified to
7 the proposed budget, we are not decre-- it looks--
8 \$26 million to \$9.1 million. I'm having a problem
9 with the math.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Councilmember
11 Avilés, a lot of that money is coming from the City
12 Council. That money is not in our budget for FY 24
13 yet. So if the City Council provides that funding
14 again in the budget next year, it will be reflected
15 there. But the baseline funds in the budget is what
16 you're seeing right now. And-- and the difference is
17 the funding that's associated the City Council, if
18 you're talking about that substantial gap. The \$3.5
19 is what I was saying earlier, but you're referring to
20 different figures, and that's the funding that's
21 associated the City Council funds.

22 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Okay, well, we're going
23 to-- we're going to keep battling it out. And I will
24 underscore the importance of adult literacy
25 particularly given the context of you know, having

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2 the new arrivals in our communities. We were broken
3 before we had 65,000 new arrivals hitting our city,
4 and we should-- we should be in abundance in this
5 particular area because it is fundamental to
6 stabilizing and-- and integrating into the community
7 quite frankly, right? So I just can't believe that
8 we're still like wrangling over, really,
9 underfunding, quite frankly.

10 One other question: In terms of the-- Oh, in
11 terms of Work, Learn & Grow. Obviously, there is a
12 lot of support here for year-round funding for all
13 young people. Can-- Can you tell me-- I guess two--
14 two things. I'm sorry. SYEP: Why were the
15 MetroCards eliminated for young people? It seems
16 incomprehensible that that could be just written off,
17 given this is a direct financial impact on young
18 people, many whom contribute to their families, and
19 riding the subway is quite expensive. Why-- Why was
20 that decision made?

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So the conversation is
22 still ongoing, I assume, with the Council and the
23 adopted budget with the Administration. So I
24 wouldn't say it's been written off. I'm basically
25 saying that the conversation is still ongoing. So

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2 the enhancement that was part of the SYEP program
3 with the MetroCard, we understand the need to be able
4 to continue that program. But that's still ongoing
5 conversations that is occurring.

6 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Okay. I guess why I say
7 it is written off is because it should be in there.
8 We shouldn't be having a conversation about it. It--
9 Given that-- Given the budget context and the
10 surplus, by which we've heard quite a lot. I mean,
11 over OMB has already documented we have quite a
12 significant surplus. Yes, we do have risk elements
13 in the budget. Nevertheless, removing MetroCards
14 from SYEP students just seems absurd to me. But so
15 we will advocate for making sure that's in there. In
16 terms of Work, Learn, & Grow: Obviously, a program
17 we support and would like to see expanded, I believe
18 this Council has been advocating for 5000 slots, if
19 not more. Can you tell me why the Administration
20 hasn't supported the growth of this project beyond
21 the baselined allocation?

22 I wouldn't use the word "not supported". But I
23 just wanted to just focus in on the quality of the
24 program. You know, so we can talk about the quality
25 of the program.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Well, I think we're--
3 we're not debating the quality of the program. We
4 are-- we are suggesting here that we want it
5 expanded significantly. And we want to see the
6 Administration standing behind it and funding it
7 properly and fully at 5000 slots. So I'm asking why
8 the decision was made not to do so.

9 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, I'm going to keep
10 circling back to the financial situation that the
11 City finds itself in, you know, and being able to
12 prioritize on those situations, right?

13 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: So the City has not
14 prioritized youth employment for-- for young people?

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Understanding, as you
16 mentioned before, the migrant crisis, and the-- and
17 the asylum seekers, and where we are and where we are
18 projecting--

19 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: And on ending overtime for
20 certain city agencies.

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And where we're projected
22 to be, you know So understanding that situation and
23 understanding that we still have some financial
24 issues that we need to resolve contractual issues at
25 that. Those are still conversations.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Great. Well, for the
3 record, let us show that this Council stands fully
4 behind-- fully funding our youth services, and not--
5 and not lacking political will in where that money
6 needs to be spent. It needs to be spent with our
7 young people, not on NYPD unlimited overtime. Thank
8 you so much.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Brooks-
10 Powers, followed by Joseph.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And I
12 apologize for some of the redundancy with questions.
13 I just want to make sure that understanding your
14 responses because some of them are not necessarily
15 hitting the nail on the head, if you will. And just
16 kind of building on Councilmember Avilés, when we
17 talk about the purchase of the metro cards for DYCD
18 Summer Youth Employment Program. Why was the
19 administration unwilling to fund this? What was the
20 reason, because I hear you mentioning like, the
21 Council can put it in, but why didn't the
22 Administration?

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So I did not say that the
24 Council could put it in. What I said is that there
25 were ongoing conversation between the--

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Sorry. Ongoing
3 conversation. Thank you for the clarification.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: But why did the
6 Administration not put it in?

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Again, when we talking
8 about priority and priorities in funding. And I keep
9 sounding the alarm, and I know that the
10 councilmembers, you know, hear me. But again, we are
11 Protein a situation, you know, that we have to make
12 budget decisions on. And I think that the Mayor is
13 very, very clear. And, you know, being able to ask
14 our federal partners and our state partners for more
15 help with the asylum seekers, also understanding that
16 there are contract obligations that we still need to
17 fulfill. So I'm not saying that the MetroCard isn't
18 important. I'm saying that there are other financial
19 situations that are still in conversation, and we're
20 still in conversations with OMB. And we're still in
21 conversations with Council and the Administration.

22 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: To that point, as--
23 when you mentioned asylum seekers, I imagine that
24 there's going to be an additional strain on your
25 agency beyond like just budgetary, but in terms of

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2 programmatic as well. And it just seems like the
3 Administration continues to fail to account for it in
4 the budget. And I'm still unclear on what the
5 administration's plan of action is. The asylum
6 seekers have been coming in for about a year now into
7 New York City. We keep hearing: It's going to keep
8 getting worse, it's going to keep getting worse. But
9 all I'm hearing is: Go beat up on-- on the federal
10 government and the state. But what is the City's
11 plan of action with what we have right now, to
12 address the needs of what we have right now? I'm not
13 really hearing that.

14 So what you're hearing is the-- the initiative
15 that-- and the investment that we provided, when--
16 last year, and how we were in close contact with our
17 providers who are running the RHY Program, and the
18 level of investments that we were able to come back,
19 specifically Covenant House, where we are able to
20 provide \$200,000 in legal fees to be able to for them
21 to assist the migrant population.

22 We are constantly monitoring and meeting with RHY
23 providers to make sure that we hear and we understand
24 the resources that they need, and that we're having
25 those conversations with OMB and the Administration.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Also, countless
3 CBOs have contracts with DYCD. As you know, far too
4 many CBOs that have contracts with the city have not
5 been paid on time. How is DYCD helping to ensure
6 that more contracts are fulfilled on time? And how
7 is this budget helping DYCD do so?

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: so I believe I mentioned to
9 Councilmember Carr that, you know, when I got
10 appointed, we did a soups-to-nuts review of the
11 contracting process to make sure that we eliminate
12 any fiscal barriers that are not embedded in law.
13 And we've started to look at those changes and make
14 recommendations to streamline our contracting process
15 internally. But I also want to emphasize that this
16 past summer, with the First Deputy Mayor and her
17 initiative to get nonprofits paid, \$6.2 billion was--
18 was pushed through the system. And I know that the
19 Chair, Chair Stevens is going to say, "Well, those
20 are monies that was already owed to the contractor,"
21 because that's what she says. But I also want to
22 emphasize the fact that it was a 12-week initiative
23 to push monies to, you know, our CBO partners.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: To expand what
25 the commissioner said: I just want to expand on that

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2 I said earlier. DYCD has a very large FY 24
3 continuation plan. We sent about 90% of the
4 contracts to providers already. And so we're doing
5 everything we can to ensure that contracts are
6 registered on time by 07/01. And so in reaction to
7 what the Commissioner mentioned, as far as the
8 consultant that came in and looked in, we've made
9 changes already that we've already have 90% of the
10 contracts out the door to providers to ensure that
11 things can get registered. So you know, it's a team
12 sport. And so we encourage the providers to submit
13 documents as quickly as possible. However, for
14 contracts that are not registered, DYCD also initiated
15 additional advances. So as I said earlier, we have a
16 25% advance policy. We added additional advances.
17 And so throughout this year, year to date, we added
18 an additional 77 advances. We did initially have
19 1600. And so we added 77 additional, which served 27
20 contracts. So DYCD advanced about in total \$148
21 million to the sector last year. And for this
22 upcoming fiscal year, we're trying to ensure that
23 cash flow is not a major challenge. And so we're
24 trying to make sure that we get contracts registered
25 on time. So we're doing everything we can to make

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2 sure that we don't have a new backlog, so Chair
3 Stevens doesn't say you, you know you do what you're
4 supposed to do. So we're making sure that at this
5 time we're doing it upfront, and we're being
6 proactive instead of reactive. So we're doing what
7 we can to sort of address the issue.

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I want to make sure and
9 emphasize that the first deputy mayor is raised to
10 focus to just to make sure. And not only that, with
11 the creation of the Mayor's Office of Nonprofit with
12 Karen Ford. She's also a true partner in making sure
13 that, you know, the voices of the nonprofit's are
14 being heard.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: No, I appreciate
16 that. And I note a lot of the questions spend some
17 time on the Office of Neighborhood Safety. But I
18 just had two really quick questions just to add to
19 the conversation. One is: What are some of the
20 challenges that this transition poses to DYCD
21 operations? So if you can list the three challenges?

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They already said they
23 don't have any challenges.

24 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I never said that. I said
25 that we were in conversation with MOCJ--

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: What would be the
3 three top--

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We were in conversation
5 with MOCJ, because we're still going through the
6 transition. Now my First Deputy Commissioner had
7 mentioned contracts, and contracts as possible
8 issues. But we haven't landed there to see exactly
9 if there are issues, but--

10 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I hope not because
11 I have a-- I have a program that's shifting from MOCJ
12 to DYCD. And it seems like it's been a challenge in
13 terms of communication.

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, we would love to talk
15 to you about those challenges, because one of the
16 things that we do, and we do well is outreach, you
17 know, so if we can sit down with you, and you can
18 explain those challenges, we can work towards that.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I would love to. I
20 heard you were my district. So next time we make
21 sure we connect when you're out there.

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I was.

23 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Does the amount
24 budgeted for fiscal 24 provide additional support to
25 help facilitate this transition?

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2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: As part of the
3 New Needs submission, OMB has provided the additional
4 funding with regarding headcount to ensure that we
5 have a more seamless and smooth transition. Yes, we
6 will anticipate challenges, but we are confident that
7 we'll be able to effectively navigate them.

8 And is there, like-- Okay, I'll take that. I'll
9 have a followup conversation.

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We appreciate it.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Thank you
12 again.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, at least they listed
14 the challenges when you asked because they said they
15 didn't say anything when I asked. So...

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And again, we're still
17 transitioning.

18 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: That's why I asked
19 for the top three.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Joseph
21 followed by Williams.

22 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Hello,
23 Commissioner. How are you?

24 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: All right. How are you
25 doing?

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2 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: I'm great. Question is:
3 What kind of flexibility does DYCD have in offering
4 legal service providers to improve their ability to
5 respond to the rising need for complex immigration
6 legal services, as we see Title 42 will sunset
7 tomorrow? We want to know how are you guys getting
8 prepared? We've been calling the alarm on this since
9 2021. This is not new. Councilmember Louis and I,
10 who was here earlier, we were at-- under the bridge
11 at the borders. And we saw the numbers, we came
12 back. We flagged it for the previous administration.
13 We flagged it for this administration as well.

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Right. So you know, I did
15 emphasize the fact that, you know, our providers--
16 and we are in contact with our providers on a regular
17 basis. And that one of the challenges that Covenant
18 House did indicate was, "Hey, you know, what we need
19 help with legal services." And we were able to, you
20 know, provide \$200,000 in legal services for Covenant
21 House.

22 When providers talk to us, and as we're going
23 through our weekly and bi-weekly, and monthly
24 meetings with those providers, they are literally
25 very vocal about what resources they would need. And

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2 I can honestly tell you that we're taking those very,
3 very seriously, especially understanding, you know,
4 Title 42. And exactly what's-- what we are going to
5 be seeing in the upcoming weeks.

6 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: There's already 24,000
7 People at the borders as this hearing is happening.
8 So we operate in a place of crisis, we need to have a
9 plan of action in order.

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Absolutely.

11 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: So-- And asylum cases are
12 very complex. If you know anything about
13 immigration. They take years.

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No. They are very complex.
15 And not only that, but there is-- lawyers in the
16 legal profession handling that sort of skill is very
17 far-- you know, where we see a lot of issues with
18 being able to find competent attorneys to be able to
19 handle those issues.

20 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: I know that at one point
21 you had a \$5 million RFP in a pot. Is that still
22 available? Legal Services?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: A \$5 million
24 period of time for...?

25

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2 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Immigration attorneys.

3 There was an RFP out.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: We didn't-- I
5 don't-- I'm unaware of any RFP that was released for
6 \$5 million for legal services. I know the Council
7 added \$5 million last year regarding language line.
8 But we-- there was no RFP that DYCD procured for
9 legal services.

10 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, I hope this
11 conversation continues because this is-- and I don't
12 understand why we're not at a state of emergency.
13 So...

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And understanding exactly
15 that you were on the ground. I know we haven't had
16 an opportunity to really sit down and converse--

17 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Oh no. We haven't met,
18 and I'm the Education Chair.

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I know. And converse. So
20 we definitely need to make some time to talk.

21 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: And I look forward to it.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We're putting it on the
23 books.

24 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Huh?

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We're putting it on the
3 books.

4 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Oh, we're putting on our
5 books. Chair Stevens and I will show up. We'll roll
6 up together.

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay.

8 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: We got you. Thank you so
9 much.

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Williams,
12 followed by Won.

13 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Good afternoon.

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: How are you doing
15 Councilmember?

16 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: I'm good. How are you
17 guys?

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Great.

19 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Great. So at a hearing
20 on my birthday, actually, it was asked -- 03/29 the
21 greatest day ever-- it was asked why some schools
22 have some-- so many schools have after school
23 programs and others don't. I guess this question is
24 worded weird, but some communities have an
25 overabundance of after schools, while other

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2 communities don't. I don't know It probably wasn't
3 you. It was someone else from your Administration
4 who responded that you are looking at an equitable
5 distribution of after-school programs. Can you
6 explain to us a bit of that process? I know it was
7 just in March, but it-- has there been any in any
8 progress on that? Is this a funding issue that will
9 prevent some schools from having more after school
10 programs than others?

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So if we were talking
12 about, you know, COMPASS, and SONIC, I believe our
13 contracts have been extended for two additional
14 years. But when we are talking about attendance, and
15 as our project-- program managers are going out,
16 doing evaluation on attendance, trying to understand
17 exactly in our portfolio, why our community-based
18 partners are struggling (some are, some aren't) with
19 attendance situations. We're taking a look at that
20 in DYCD, and understanding exactly what those
21 problems are. And how we can be more efficient. And
22 not only efficient, but looking at it in terms of the
23 boroughs and understanding exactly, you know, what
24 are the pain points? What are the pain points that
25 we're having in programs?

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2 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, I know, some
3 programs are overcrowded. And then some programs
4 don't have attendance. So it probably has something
5 to do with the type of program that they're offering.
6 Which actually brings me to my next question around
7 Saturday Night Lights. And I know you fielded a lot
8 of questions around that. But is there any plan or
9 maybe future plans to create a more robust
10 curriculum? So a lot of the providers that I spoke
11 to, you know, it's great, because we're bringing the
12 young people into a safe space. But the comment that
13 I received is they're just throwing balls around like
14 in the basketball court. So like, what-- what else
15 can we do to provide more curriculum, not that we
16 sort of brought them into a safe space? So is there
17 any plans to create a more robust curriculum, program
18 development of Saturday Night Lights?

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So one of the things that
20 we do well at DYCD is adapt, right? So if we're
21 talking with our community based organizations, and
22 we're looking at the attendance, and we're
23 understanding that the goal is to attract young
24 people to the safe space, we're constantly evaluating
25 to see exactly what we're going to need to do that.

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2 If you know, and you have ideas on how we can do
3 that. We'll be very welcome to sit down and listen
4 to your ideas and your feedback that you're getting
5 from young people.

6 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, yeah. And you
7 said evaluate, and the Chair quickly leaned over and
8 said--

9 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: She said "evaluate our
10 programs."

11 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. Is-- can you
12 provide that eval-- like is that evaluation reports,
13 or...?

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So our project managers,
15 our program managers go out and we look at programs,
16 and we look at programs to see exactly if the-- if
17 they need to adapt to different curriculum to-- in
18 order to attract, but that's just standard, a
19 standard, you know, evaluation and evaluation
20 protocols.

21 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, and just wanted to
22 also support Councilmember Riley's idea around the
23 pools. I know some Saturday Night Lights programs
24 operate in spaces that have pools. Like the one in
25 my district, there's a pool that Ray Wilkins, and the

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2 other one that's going to be in my new district at
3 the Y, they also have a pool there, so it might be
4 easier to do than you think for some locations.

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No. I understand. And we
6 have a very good relationship with SQPA.

7 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Oh, actually, that's
8 Saturday Night Lights program. See, I wasn't going
9 to go there. But that-- You brought it up. Because
10 that's Saturday Night Lights program is actually not
11 run by SQPA. It's run by Parks, which I think is
12 crazy because it should be run by a locally-based
13 organization, but you all have some Saturday Night
14 Lights programs that are run by other city agencies,
15 which is questionable.

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So what I was getting ready
17 to say is we have an excellent relationship with
18 SQPA, who runs a significant amount of our programs,
19 you know, so having them as real thought partners on
20 exactly, you know, what we need to do to capture the
21 interests of kids is-- is what we constantly do in
22 DYCD. Not saying that they are running the Saturday
23 Night Lights. I'm saying that in that space at Roy
24 Wilkins, we know that they're one of the major
25 thought partners that we have out there.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes, and I love to hear
3 that because I actually agree that locally-based
4 organizations that know the community that can bring
5 people into the program should be the ones that are a
6 part of these programs. So it's very unfortunate to
7 see in Queens, the DA's office is kind of like in the
8 mix with some of the Saturday Night Lights programs.
9 And so is the Parks Department. So, again, you have
10 other agencies sort of intermingling into this
11 process, which to me really like waters down-- waters
12 down the type of programs we can offer to the
13 community.

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, I respectfully
15 disagree on Parks Department, and our DAs, you know,
16 are very good thought partners. And we worked very
17 well with them to run programs.

18 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: I didn't say that they
19 were not good thought partners. I'm just saying on
20 the grounds--

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Sure.

22 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: --from my observations,
23 I don't think that they're adequately delivering the
24 services, and bringing in the young people in ways
25 that I feel are meaningful. And I don't think it's

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2 just the DA and the Parks Department. I think a lot
3 of providers are also going off of what they're
4 supposed to be held accountable for in their
5 contracts, which is an issue that we have with CMS,
6 where you are actually telling this organization to
7 do? And if you're just telling the organization,
8 "Just get some kids in and have them, you know, play
9 basketball," then that's what they're going to do.
10 But if there's more accountability from the agency
11 side to say, "Hey, actually, let's get them into play
12 basketball and ask them if they need food," or ask
13 them how they're doing in school, or funnel them to
14 other services that they may need, by just maybe
15 asking questions or doing one on ones, then yes, you
16 will have providers or the DA or the Parks Department
17 doing that type of work. So, I just wanted to...

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I hear you.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: And also, I just
20 want to just add that the DA is starting to actually
21 transfer into DYCD in FY 24.

22 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: I missed what you said.

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: There are 13 DA
24 sites that you're referencing. DYCD will be
25 operating them in FY 24.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Great. So I guess they
3 aren't much of a great thought partner, since it'll
4 just be DYCD.

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: They will still remain as
6 thought partners, Councilmember.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Councilmember Abreu.

8 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: All right. Thank you,
9 Commissioner DYCD. I think you have a thought
10 partner on the Council should you want one.

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Absolutely.

12 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: So my question is: We have
13 a few Cornerstone projects in our-- in our district
14 throughout NYCHA. My question is: Are there any
15 advancements in RFP to address the issues and retain
16 staffing for the programs? This is something that I
17 think was asked earlier, but I just want to get
18 something on the record for that.

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So our CBO partners, we
20 work with them in capacity building. And we've--
21 we've done joint job fairs to make sure that they can
22 retain, and not only retain, but also bring on new
23 staff.

24 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: And do you have any idea of
25 an estimate of funding that would be required to

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2 address the needs of the providers for these
3 programs?

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: In terms of staffing
5 appropriately? Is that--

6 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: Funding to, you know, to
7 address the issues that are coming as a result of the
8 right-sizing? So like retaining staff or, you know,
9 adding positions?

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We actually rely mostly on
11 the CBOs to be able to tell us exactly what their
12 issues are, and what their staffing issues are.
13 We're currently going to do a survey across program
14 areas to understand exactly what positions they feel
15 are hard-to-recruit positions, and how we can just
16 tailor-- and tailor focus on those positions as well.

17 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: And my last question is, we
18 all-- we often talk about Summer Youth Employment
19 Programs, which we want to continue to support for.
20 I'm a product from high school employment that was
21 year round, working at the New York Public Library,
22 in my own-- my own district. I wish these were
23 opportunities that were available to kids other than
24 myself. I guess, is there a plan, you know, in the
25

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2 future for the Administration to consider a year-
3 round youth employment in addition to summer?

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So we did comment on that.

5 And there are 2000, currently 2000 slots, in our
6 Work, Learn, & Grow program. So we're-- we're
7 constantly talking with the Administration and OMB to
8 see exactly how we can grow that program, but those
9 conversations are still ongoing.

10 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: Thank you, Commissioner.

11 And I also want to say thank you for working with our
12 office regarding the slots that were underenrolled
13 last year. This year, I think we're seeing those
14 numbers change. And I know that our office was
15 working with you on that, and you made yourself
16 available, you've come to my district, and you've
17 done the outreach. So we're really grateful for
18 that.

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I appreciate that. And
20 yes, you [inaudible].

21 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: I know.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Okay. Chair Stevens to
23 close us out with some questions.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just really quickly.

25 Councilmember Riley asked me to ask: How much

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2 funding is allocated towards the Father-- the Father
3 Initiative?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Sure. Give me
5 one second. I can get that information. It's been a
6 busy morning.

7 Yes, Fatherhood in FY 24 will be \$2.8 million.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BAILEY: \$2.8 million.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: \$2.8 million. Thank you.

11 And just a couple of questions: A follow up question
12 from-- at our last hearing, we talked about having a
13 meeting with providers around the RHY sites, and the
14 drop-in center, around clarity, around sleep and rest
15 and all those things. And I have still heard from
16 providers that there was no meeting that was had
17 specifically around this to give them guidance.

18 Could you give me a date on when you will be
19 meeting with providers to give them clarity around
20 the drop-in centers and the confusion around the no-
21 sleep and resting in the centers?

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So we have been meeting
23 with our providers on-- in the RHY, specifically in
24 the drop-in programs, just reiterating exactly what

25

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2 the guidance, and also fielding their questions. But
3 Susan, if you could--

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just want to say again,
5 but as I said at the last hearing, that clearly
6 there's a disconnect, because this was a question
7 that providers gave me today. And if you are meeting
8 with them, they clearly are not getting the answers
9 that they are looking for, because they keep reaching
10 out to me saying that they still need guidance. So I
11 have been at some of your trainings before, where
12 there is a presentation, the chat is turned off. And
13 then there's no time for questioning. So I just want
14 to be clear that providers are saying that they still
15 have not had a meeting and they still do not have
16 clear guidance.

17 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So in terms of the FAQs
18 that we're working on, we are working on the FAQ to
19 be able to specifically hone in on some of the issues
20 in regards to drop-in centers and the compliance
21 issues. But I can honestly tell you, and Susan is
22 going to echo this, that we are in constant contact
23 with our providers. If a provider is reporting to
24 you that we haven't been speaking to them. I would
25 like to speak to them.

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2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Speaking to them and
3 actually getting the guidance is not the same thing.
4 Like I said-- Remember, I used to be a provider, I
5 remember what those trainings would be. It would be
6 on the webcam. There would be no room for questions,
7 and the chat would be turned off. So those are the
8 meetings you're referring to, that as not a clear
9 conversation about what programs and guidance that
10 they need, because they're not able to ask the
11 questions that they need.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Chair Stevens after
13 the hearing and your communication and at the
14 commissioners encouragement. I personally with my
15 staff spoke with leadership individually at each of
16 the five 24-hour drop in centers within the past
17 week. We had conversations on the phone that were
18 not time limited. What are your questions? How are
19 things going? What have you learned? What do you
20 need to know from us? What would you like to get in
21 an FAQ? It was really it was actually very valuable
22 to have those one on one conversations. But I echo
23 commissioner just say please be specific about
24 anybody who still has questions. What are those
25 questions? Because we really are-- The Commissioner

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2 has also said like engage more frequently, even more
3 frequently, and we will continue to do that. But we
4 definitely had conversations with all five of those
5 drop in centers.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm not saying that you
7 don't but as of this morning, I got a text messages.
8 And that was the same question. So there is a
9 disconnect, and we need to figure that out.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNON: Commissioner and your team,
12 thank you all so much. We look forward to working
13 with you and the as we head into negotiations.

14 Thank you so much.

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Thank you. Thank you.
16 Thank you members. I appreciate it.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, with that day three
18 of executive budget hearings is adjourned. Thank
19 you.

20 [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date 05/15/2023