



**TESTIMONY**

Presented by

**Dr. Lisa Scott-McKenzie  
Commissioner**

on

**FY 2027 Preliminary Budget**

before the

**New York City Council**

**Committee on Aging**

on

**Thursday, March 12, 2026  
At 12:30 p.m.**

Good morning, Chair Zhuang, and members of the Committee on Aging, I am Lisa Scott-McKenzie, Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging (NYC Aging). I am joined this afternoon by Jose Mercado, our Chief Financial Officer. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss NYC Aging's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027 (FY 27).

I am speaking to you this morning on my ninth official day as the Commissioner for NYC Aging. I am excited to serve as the head of this agency, delivering vital services to nearly two million New Yorkers over the age of 60. We of course do this through our partnership with hundreds of contracted providers across a range of programs, and much of our success is due to the relationship we have fostered over the years with these dedicated professionals in aging services. I am proud to bring my years of experience working at New York City Health + Hospitals, most recently as the Chief Operating Officer at Woodhull Hospital in Brooklyn, to this new role. I am committed to bringing the same innovative approach to aging services and pursuit of excellence in the way we serve older New Yorkers to my time as Commissioner. We believe that New York City's older adults have earned the right to age gracefully and with dignity in the communities they have built. Nurturing and fostering that reality for older adults is fundamental to the work of this agency.

To support this important work, our FY 27 Preliminary Budget projects \$573.5 million in funding, of which \$469.5 million is in City funds. This includes allocations to core programs you are all familiar with including \$240.8 million to support Older Adult Centers (OACs), \$78 million for home delivered meals (HDM), and \$47.4 million for case management (CMA). The work done by OACs, HDM programs, and our CMA providers combat poverty and financial insecurity while also connecting older adults to in-home services which address their needs when struggling with activities of daily living. There are also allocations of \$36.5 million to support home care for homebound older adults who are not Medicaid-eligible which allows older New Yorkers to age-in-place, and \$16.3 million for NORC programs which provide similar services as OACs, other than meals, for recreation and combatting social isolation but includes nursing services. Finally, \$14.2 million for caregiver services supporting the 1.3 million caregivers and their care receivers in the City, and \$7.1 million for transportation services allowing older adults to be connected to community centers, houses of worship, shopping, and medical appointments. These numbers tell only a portion of the story beyond the services included at NYC Aging and show the human side of the work we do to make New York City fully age-inclusive.

As this Administration has made clear, there are key challenges in the City financially, and NYC Aging is always prepared to prioritize the needs of older adults and our core aging services while limiting the impacts of these challenges. Nonetheless, we are still keenly aware of these challenges which have been exacerbated by changes to the federal landscape, and the need for continued and increased investment from the State to support the growing number of older adults throughout New York. We also continue to advocate that our State and Federal partners share the financial responsibility of serving older New Yorkers living in the City.

Over the current fiscal year, we are proud of our work done along with the work of our non-profit partners in addressing some notable recent successes and upcoming items we are looking forward to:

- In November of 2025, NYC Aging celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. As the largest Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in the country we are proud to be the first in a number of accomplishments including developing the Community Care Plan, creating the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, and utilizing our platform as an agency to take us from "age-friendly" to "age-inclusive." NYC Aging's commitment to service and leadership will build a future where every New Yorker can age with dignity and respect.
- In FY 2025, NYC Aging once again hit a post-pandemic record of 10 million meals served to older New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs. This includes 6.1 million meals served at the 300-plus OACs in the network and 4.2 million meals delivered by our HDM providers. As we have said before, when the Older Americans Act (OAA) was passed more than 60 years ago this July in 1965, a key reason for

creating that pivotal legislation was to address older adult poverty nationwide through nutrition and supportive services. While the significance of what it means to be an older adult may have changed since the 1960s, the basic human needs for dignified aging—meals, health, agency, safety, and income—remain the same.

- Last fall we launched a dynamic *Ageism Stops with You* campaign, focused on calling out ageism regardless of age. This reminds both older and younger New Yorkers that age discrimination affects all of us, and we should call it out, reject it, and challenge ageism together. This multi-lingual campaign is not the only effort our agency has put toward combatting ageism, but is complimented by our *Anti-Ageism High School Resource Guide*, and the intergenerational *My NY Story* Campaign. Both these endeavors have been developed through the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers and were recognized as “Programs of Merit” by Generations United. We are proud of the work we are doing to fundamentally push against ageism in New York City.
- Finally, last July, we were pleased to release the State of Older New Yorkers report which was developed based on the results of our milestone Service Needs Assessment administered in 2024. We have learned much information about the way older adults perceive their environment and aging in New York City, and we have learned about the work and challenges our agency needs to overcome in order to better meet the needs of older adults. This report has informed our work and allowed us to develop a better understanding of what older New Yorkers are really experiencing on a daily basis.

We are thrilled about these recent successes and some key programs supported in this Preliminary Budget which shape our core services and improve the lives of older adults in New York City.

### **Congregate and Home Delivered Meals Programming**

Two of NYC Aging’s core services are OACs and the HDM program which are intrinsically connected to providing meals and nutrition assistance to older adults. In recent years we have altered our own thinking and clearly see congregate or home delivered meals as programs which provide “food as medicine.” These are essential services for healthy living and preventing the social isolation that affects older adults at a very basic level. The work done by OACs, HDM programs, and our CMA providers combat poverty and financial insecurity which address their needs when struggling with the activities of daily living. Not only does the HDM program provide meals to homebound older New Yorkers, the interaction with the delivery person—which for many of our clients may be the only direct human interaction for the day—supports our ongoing effort to combat social isolation, again a critical aspect of our Community Care approach. This program continues to follow the strict guidance set by the state and is open to those who meet the criteria.

Additionally, because financial insecurity remains among the most critical needs of older adults, and it is highly correlated to food insecurity, NYC Aging is continually evaluating our efforts and exploring areas for improvement. While workforce programs continue to be a way for older adults to avoid long-term poverty, meals programs are a life-line to older adults struggling with financial and food insecurity. This includes enhancing meal options for recipients, embracing the diversity of our city by increasing the availability of culturally aligned meals, and promoting uniformly high-quality and nutritious meals. Over the past few years, per-meal reimbursement rates have gradually risen to help meet the needs of our providers serving these critical meals. These have been key improvements to service and our providers that we have met through partnership between this Administration and Council leadership.

### **Homecare & Caregiver Services**

As the number of older adults in New York City continues to grow, it is imperative that we continue to grow the community care support systems which allow older New Yorkers to remain in the communities they built and truly age in place. We do this through Homecare and Caregiver services which greatly serve those who are

homebound or in need of additional supports. Homecare services are provided through Medicaid reimbursement and for those who do not qualify for Medicaid programs, through the Expanded In-Home Services for Elderly Persons (EISEP) program where case management hours are reimbursed to providers. Without this, EISEP clients are at a disadvantage when Medicaid Homecare workers are incentivized to take on those clients because the pay is higher. There is no distinction between EISEP and Medicaid Homecare workers, they are primarily women of color, and this exacerbates inequity because of the salary. Currently, the Homecare program at NYC Aging is funded at \$36.5 million for FY 27.

Many older adults are caretakers for their aging parent or others. Many are caregivers who also have full time jobs. The caregiver program offers options for respite care through home care or participation in social adult day care. There are an estimated 1.3 million New Yorkers who function as a caregiver. We know that the cost of maintaining an older adult in institutionalized care is far higher when compared to the cost of community care options such as supporting caregivers. It costs, on average, \$160,980 to house an older adult in institutionalized care whereas the average cost of community care services is roughly \$32,000 per person per year. In FY 27, funding for the caregiver program is currently projected to be \$14.2 million. We are additionally excited to announce that a citywide caregiver campaign has just launched today and will help to educate New Yorkers about this incredibly important program at NYC Aging. Caregiver supports positively impact the health and well-being of older adults while aligning with the cultural background of the individual. This is why Community Care is so incredibly important to the future of older New Yorkers.

### **Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities**

As New York City's population ages rapidly, ensuring older adults can age in place is paramount. Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) are a vital piece of the community care puzzle. Through contracted providers, NYC Aging currently funds 36 NORCs across the city, delivering essential social services directly to where older adults live. NORC programs are uniquely positioned within people's homes and communities, offering services distinct from traditional Older Adult Centers. Just like caregiver supports, NORCs are a fundamentally sound investment in community care that saves the city money while improving lives. NORC staff also intervene early to prevent the negative health impacts that lead to costly institutionalization. Beyond healthcare, they empower older adults to advocate for their daily living needs.

Currently, the NORC program is funded at \$16.3 million in New York City. Because they are embedded in the community, NORC staff provide vital healthcare management to address long term housing issues. These are key interventions that prevent older adults from being forced into institutional care. Just this year, the Governor's 2026 State of the State address underscored the immense value of this model by proposing to double state investments in NORCs to \$16 million. This commitment highlights the immense impact that this program has and we know that Council has contributed discretionary funds to NORC programs as well in past years. These integrated services keep older New Yorkers safely in the communities they helped build, which is their overwhelming preference. Maintaining and expanding NORC funding is essential to our shared goal of making New York a truly age-friendly city, and we welcome your continued advocacy and investment in these critical community anchors.

### **Conclusion**

I continue to be proud of the great work that NYC Aging and our providers accomplish with our resources. This past year has shown where NYC Aging is prepared to prioritize vital programs that truly meet the needs of older New Yorkers and continue to advocate for innovations in aging services which look to the future. Even in the face of challenges, we continue to be good stewards of public dollars. That said, given the need for further investment from our state and federal partners, we continue to be concerned about the current uncertainty and what changes may affect NYC Aging. It is imperative now more than ever, that New York City receive its fair



share of aging services funding and that federal grants continue to be disbursed for these vital programs and services. We are grateful to the Chairs and Committee members for your ongoing advocacy and continued partnership to support older New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time today. Mr. Mercado and I are happy to answer your questions.

**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027  
Preliminary Budget Hearings  
Committee on Aging, March 12th, 2026**

**Testimony of Erum Hanif, Chief Executive Officer, APNA Community Services**

Good afternoon, my name is Erum Hanif and I am Chief Executive Officer for APNA Community Services. Thank you very much to **Councilmembers: Susan Zhuang, Gale A. Brewer, Eric Dinowitz, Shirley Aldebol, Crystal Hudson, Darlene Mealy** for holding this hearing and providing the opportunity to testify.

APNA Community Services is a proud member of the 18% and Growing Campaign. Led by CACF, 18% and Growing is a critical and diverse city-wide campaign **uniting over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations across New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members**. We advocate as a collective in solidarity to hold New York City accountable in providing the necessary resources to serve and empower the diverse needs of all AAPI New Yorkers and other communities of color as *"We Are Building A Community Too Powerful To Ignore"*.

AAPI communities across New York City are historically underserved and under supported directly due to the marginalization of the community. Though AAPI New Yorkers represent almost 18% of the population, the community struggles to be seen as worthy of city resources. AAPI communities need access to health insurance, linguistic accessibility across institutions and agencies, childcare, legal services, housing, educational support, domestic violence support, and so much more. The need for resources often falls on the shoulders of CBOs and nonprofits to fill the gap created by city government. This is an equity issue in the budget and consistently gets in the way of AAPI communities truly feeling supported.

APNA Community Services has utilized funding through the City's AAPI Community Support Initiative (CSI) and related city investments to expand culturally responsive programs that address the urgent and evolving needs of South Asian, AAPI and Muslim communities across New York City. These resources have allowed APNA to strengthen a holistic service model that integrates food security, case management, immigrant support services, youth development, and community safety initiatives.

Through this support, APNA has been able to provide thousands of families with access to culturally appropriate food, including halal groceries and emergency food distributions, while also delivering wraparound services that address housing instability, immigration challenges, and economic hardship. The funding has supported multilingual programming, enabling staff and volunteers to serve community members in languages such as Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, and Hindi - ensuring that immigrant and limited-English proficient residents can access essential services with dignity.

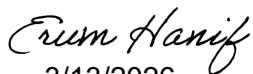
City investment has also enabled APNA to expand youth leadership and educational programming, digital literacy initiatives for seniors, and community-based safety and anti-hate outreach in response to the rise in anti-Asian and anti-Muslim hate incidents. These programs create safe spaces where residents can receive support, build civic awareness, and strengthen community resilience.

The impact of this funding extends far beyond service delivery. It has helped APNA deepen trust within historically underserved communities, reduce barriers to critical resources, and empower residents to engage with local institutions and public systems. By investing in organizations like APNA that are deeply rooted in the communities they serve, the City is strengthening the infrastructure needed to support immigrant families, combat hate, and ensure that AAPI New Yorkers have equitable access to opportunity, safety, and wellbeing.

**APNA Community Services urges the New York City Council to uplift the collective priorities of the 18% and Growing Campaign which include expanding the AAPI Community Support Initiative to \$7.5 million, Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to \$10 million, and the Access Health Initiative to \$4.5 million,** to take further steps in not envisioning, but truly creating a more inclusive, safe, healthy, and sustainable society for our diverse diaspora.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,



3/13/2026

Erum Hanif  
Chief Executive Officer  
APNA Community Services



Grounded in community.  
Advocating for all.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, COMMITTEE ON AGING, PRELIMINARY  
BUDGET HEARING BY BUILD UP JUSTICE NYC

March 12, 2026

Dear Chair Zhuang and members of the Committee on Aging,

My name is Jessica Rose, Esq., and I am the Executive Director of Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, doing business as Build Up Justice NYC (BUJNYC). BUJNYC provides low- and moderate-income clients throughout the five boroughs of New York City with services for tenants, homeowners, small business owners, community nonprofits, taxpayers, survivors of domestic violence, and more. Last year, our work impacted nearly 9,600 New Yorkers across our many programs.

At BUJNYC, we know how important civil legal services are to maintaining stability for older adults. In FY25, more than a quarter of our clients were at least 60 years old. Whether we're preventing evictions or foreclosures, resolving tax issues, or formalizing a will, we work hard to ensure that New Yorkers don't jeopardize their futures or their legacies simply because they cannot afford a private attorney. We are glad to work closely with the City Council as a partner in addressing the needs of older New Yorkers.

This year, we have submitted several applications for FY27 discretionary funding, including requests to fund our tenant defense, foreclosure prevention, and wills and estates work: \$130,000 from Foreclosure Prevention Initiative/Support Our Older Adults Initiative/Estate Planning & Resolution (2214439); \$150,000 from Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers (2166139); \$350,000 from the Speaker's Initiative (2214160); \$40,000 from DoVE (2214334); \$50,000 from Community Housing Preservation Strategies (2214362); \$50,000 from Information and Referral Services (2214373); and \$50,000 from Stabilizing NYC (2214395).

Build Up Justice NYC provides vulnerable homeowners across NYC with free direct legal representation, advice, and appropriate referrals to protect their home equity. BUJNYC is one of the only legal services organizations in NYC whose foreclosure prevention practice includes complex bankruptcy litigation as a strategy to resolve foreclosure cases - a strategy that is extremely effective at preventing the loss of homes and helping families regain long-term financial stability. In the last City fiscal year alone, we defended 370 individuals and families facing foreclosure and/or discriminatory practices by predatory lenders, financial institutions, and home-rescue scam artists. More than 80% of the homes we protected were owned by people of color.

A November report from the Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN) found that foreclosures "surged" in the first half of 2025, nearly doubling the total recorded between January to July of 2024. The threat of deed theft remains a significant concern for many homeowners as well. Another CNYCN report, drawing on data from the NYC Sheriff's Office, found more than 3,500 deed theft complaints between 2014 and 2020 primarily in historically Black neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens. At the

same time, homeowners continue to feel significant pressure from rising insurance rates and higher-than-average property taxes, and other housing costs. As a result, housing cost burdens remain high even among homeowners. Many foreclosures are the result of predatory lending and lending scams that target people with lower credit scores and less cash on hand. In New York City, these borrowers are often people of color. The elderly, whose wealth is more likely to lie in assets, such as their homes, are also more likely to be targeted. We urge the City to continue pursuing strong enforcement and new policies to protect homeowners from deed theft and other threats and to support them in remaining in their homes and communities.

Ensuring New Yorkers can maintain their legacies also requires access to proper wills and estate planning. Last year, BUJNYC launched a new program area providing free will preparation and estate planning services to eligible New Yorkers. With just one attorney, we were able to handle 35 cases. We have already seen the value of integrating our foreclosure prevention work with wills and estates services to help homeowners avoid deed theft, title clouding, and ensure homes can pass smoothly to family members. With additional funding, we can expand this program to both offer standalone services and incorporate estate planning into our foreclosure work.

Additionally, through our housing teams in Brooklyn and Queens, BUJNYC uses legal representation, brief advice and services, legal education, and advocacy strategies to preserve affordable rental housing, prevent eviction, and combat tenant harassment and discrimination. In Brooklyn, we help tenant organizations marshal the power of collective action to secure safe and sanitary housing conditions. In the last City fiscal year, BUJNYC helped more than 3,600 individuals to maintain housing stability and supported 20 tenant associations in their efforts to fight for habitable living conditions. Like homeowners, tenants need stability to keep their families whole and, when possible, pass their apartment on to the next generation. Preventing evictions helps ensure that New York families can remain rooted in their communities for generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to this committee and we hope you will support civil legal services in the upcoming budget.

Thank you,

Jessica A. Rose, Esq.

Executive Director, Build Up Justice NYC



**Chinese-American Planning Council  
Testimony Before the Committee on Aging  
Chair, Council Member Susan Zhuang  
March 12th, 2026**

Thank you Chair Zhuang and members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. CPC is a social services organization that creates social change founded in 1965. Building on our historic legacy and ongoing dedication to the Chinese American community, CPC advances the social and economic progress of immigrant and low-income communities of New York through services, resources, and advocacy. CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 80,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities.

To that end, we are grateful to testify about the issues that greatly impact our communities. CPC serves over 11,000 older adults annually through our culturally-appropriate, linguistically accessible, community-based Senior Centers, where they participate in classes and social activities, access nutrition, health and mental health services, and get connected to resources and support. We house 300 seniors through our affordable housing units. And we serve over 3,000 older adults and people with disabilities through our Home Attendant Program.

We want to share a story of the growing needs of our aging community: Xinxing Zheng and Biran Chen, both 80 years old, have been part of the CPC Brooklyn Senior Center for a decade. During the Federal government shutdown, the halt in food-stamp benefits caused real anxiety among older residents: “Many seniors are convinced the assistance won’t come back,” Zheng said. “My wife and I have been going to our children’s homes for dinner, and it’s created an extra burden for them too.” Chen shared the same worry. “A lot of seniors in our community are already in their seventies and eighties. We have no income, no pensions. Food stamps are the only thing keeping us fed. When the benefits stopped, many of us had to rely completely on the senior center’s lunches and the free produce just to get by.”

We know that social service agencies have been lifelines to our older adult population but our City needs to do more to ensure that our social safety net is able to sustain these essential services that they heavily rely on.

**Continuing to invest and expand meal delivery service for seniors**

According to a [2024 report](#) by Citymeals on Wheels in partnership with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute, nearly half of older New Yorkers experienced food insecurity in the past year and among those receiving home-delivered meals, that number climbed to 60%. Many are unable to shop for groceries or cook for themselves, with over 40% reporting difficulty accessing groceries and 15% saying they are never able to cook at all. These statistics are indicative of the isolation, hunger, and unmet needs experienced by our older New Yorkers in every borough.



The same report found that 65% of older adults live on less than \$15,000 a year, and nearly a third do not receive Social Security. For many, there is simply no one to turn to: 45% do not have friends or family who can help them with even one meal a day. Nearly 40% report that loneliness or depression is a regular part of their lives.

Home delivered meals for seniors were crucial during the pandemic and remain so as many seniors are limited mobility and/or can't afford rising costs of groceries.

We are urging that the City allocate \$27 million to cover the HDM Weekend Meals program and ensure that meals meet nutrition standards and \$60 million for congregate meals rate increase. This rate has not increased in funding since 2019. In fact, this funding would only be an inflation adjustment, not even accounting for other challenges including SNAP uncertainty, the affordability crisis' impact on costs, and culturally-competent meals.

### **Investing in Senior Centers and Geriatric Mental Health Initiative:**

Older Adult Services have huge capital needs due to deteriorating spaces, appliances, and vehicles that have gone without necessary upgrades for the past decade. Case management organizations are serving individuals with more intensive mental health issues with less funding from the city. In addition, the Council's Geriatric Mental Health Initiative is critical to addressing the growing mental health crisis in the AAPI community, which experiences the highest rate of senior suicides. Through GMHI, we are able to break down the stigma and barriers to mental health access by normalizing mental health and providing appropriate services.

### **Healthy Aging**

The Chinese-American Planning Council Home Attendant Program, Inc. (CPCHAP) is one of the largest not-for-profit home care service agencies in New York City, licensed in 1998 by the NYS Department of Health as a Home Care Service Agency. Under contract with the New York City Human Resources Administration from the outset, CPCHAP also contracts with many managed care organizations for the provision of Personal Care Services and Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program to Medicaid-eligible individuals. CPCHAP serves about 3,000 home care recipients daily and employs over 4,000 employees.

CPCHAP is well-respected for its ability to provide culturally and linguistically competent home care services for individuals who live in one of the five boroughs of New York City and who are medically disabled, elderly and/or physically disabled who might otherwise require institutionalization. CPCHAP works with clients, their families, nurses, social workers and physicians in tailoring each plan of care and provides services for individuals who speak Chinese, Spanish, English, Russian, and Korean, as well as other languages. CPCHAP works with patients and their families to offer the care needed, ranging from a few hours each week to 24-hour care.

Asian Americans are the fastest growing population in New York State, and seniors are the fastest growing subset. Over 1 in 3 Asian American seniors live under the poverty line, and over 2 in 3 are Limited English Proficient (LEP).



Broadly speaking, New York State has the fourth oldest population in the nation, with 3.7 million people aged 60 and over. By 2030, [5.2 million people](#) in the state will be 60 and older, with 1.81 million New Yorkers will be 75 or older. An estimated [seven out of 10](#) people over the age of 65 will need some kind of long term care. In addition, there are over a million New Yorkers with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or other functional complications that require direct care, creating a significant population in New York State that requires direct care support to live and age in dignity. Direct care in homes and communities is either provided by unpaid family caregivers, paid family caregivers, or home health workers through an agency. Care that takes place in homes and in communities is often higher quality, preferred by consumers, and less costly overall than institutionalized care. Many immigrant seniors and families prefer home health care because they can receive language accessible and culturally competent care that they would not find in institutionalized settings.

Because of the growing needs of people with disabilities and an increasingly aging population, the home care sector is the largest employer in the nation, yet continues to face shortages. In NYC alone, [there are 187,000 home health](#) workers, and in New York State, there are over 330,600 home health workers. While automation and investments in technology serve to improve the function and efficacy of hospitalization and institutionalized care, this portion of the healthcare industry is highly reliant on human work, adding urgency to investments in this workforce.

We urge the Council to join us in advocating for New York State to build a robust home care sector that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

In summary, we are encouraging the Council to consider and ensure that the following are included in the FY27 adopted budget that is necessary to uplift our growing aging population:

- **\$1 billion** investment in the development of more affordable and accessible housing for older New Yorkers through the SARA program, preserving existing housing stock in HUD 202 buildings, expanding rental support through SCRIE to meet skyrocketing rents, and creating a new service program to provide in-home, group support within senior housing buildings.
- **\$800 million** for community services and spaces are vital to combating social isolation, the deadliest disease affecting older adults. Older adult centers struggle with broken HVAC systems and crumbling buildings they can't afford to address. Social and mental health needs go unmet because there is no more capacity. The City must invest in fixing broken public spaces and expanding social & mental health support.
- Combat older adult hunger by investing **\$60 million in congregate meals at Older Adult Centers**, to account for steep increases in inflation over the last seven years. Invest in **\$27 million** to expand home-delivered meals to 7 days a week, in line with Intro. 280.
- **Maintain the existing council discretionary funding to keep our system whole** which includes \$8.26 million for the Food Pantry Initiative, \$2.134 million for the Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education Initiative, and \$1.5 million for the Food Access and Benefits Initiative.





Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify on issues that greatly impact our communities. If there are any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy & Research Manager at the [achen9@cpc-nyc.org](mailto:achen9@cpc-nyc.org).



## **TESTIMONY OF CITYMEALS ON WHEELS**

**Before the New York City Council Aging Committee  
Honorable Susan Zhuang, Chair**

**FY27 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**March 12, 2026**

**Submitted by:  
Jeanette Estima  
Director, Policy and Advocacy  
Citymeals on Wheels**

Citymeals on Wheels addresses food insecurity among New York City's homebound older adults in three ways: by funding weekend meals for the City's home-delivered meals program, serving as an emergency food responder for this population, and providing additional food to those who need more than the one meal a day they receive. In FY25, Citymeals provided 2.3 million meals to 22,000 older adults in all five boroughs across all our programs.

Of the 1.8 million people aged 60 and older in New York City, 18% live below the poverty line and an increasing number are immigrants, women, and people living alone with limited social support.<sup>1</sup> The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have compounded these challenges, dramatically increasing food costs that persist to this day. As a result, we have seen food insecurity among older New Yorkers emerge as a crisis. Existing nutrition assistance programs

that many older adults access, such as SNAP and food pantries, are largely inaccessible to those unable to shop for groceries regularly or prepare their own meals. And our recent research found that the City's congregate and home-delivered meals programs simply do not go far enough, providing only 1 meal a day, 5 days a week. While Citymeals steps in to privately fund weekend meals for home-delivered meals recipients, 60% still experience food insecurity. New and expanded programs are needed to ensure that the City's most vulnerable older residents have the food they need to live safely in their homes.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the Council support the following requests:

- 1. Invest \$90 million to shore up the congregate and home-delivered meals programs, both of which continue to face steep increases in program costs due to high inflation rates and years of underfunding.**
  - a. Pass Intro 280, to require the City's home-delivered meals program to provide a meal 365 days a year, with adequate funding in the budget.**
  - b. Increase per meal reimbursement rates for HDM from \$14.78 to \$16.17/meal.**
  - c. Increase funding for congregate meals by \$60 million.**
- 2. Renew \$500,000 for our Emergency Food Programs through the Older Adult Centers, Programs, and Services Initiative.**
- 3. Renew \$600,000 for our food programs through the Feeding Our Communities Initiative.**
- 4. Renew \$50,000 for our food programs through the Food Pantries Initiative.**
- 5. Increase Community Food Connection funding at a baseline of \$100 million.**

## **Background**

The City's two main food programs targeting older adults generally provide one prepared meal on weekdays only; one program operates in a congregate setting at Older Adult Centers, and the other provides home-delivery of these meals to those who cannot regularly get to a center. In FY25, 115,508 older New Yorkers received meals at an older adult center and 23,935 received home-delivered meals (HDM).<sup>1</sup> We have long known that one daily meal falls short of meeting the needs of the most food insecure older adults who cannot regularly access additional food. In a national survey from 2018, 66 percent of home-delivered and 54 percent

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<sup>1</sup> Mayor's Management Report. September 2025. Accessed at: [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2025/2025\\_mmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2025/2025_mmr.pdf)

For more information please contact:

Jeanette Estima, Director, Policy & Advocacy, Citymeals on Wheels, [jeanette@citymeals.org](mailto:jeanette@citymeals.org)

of congregate meal recipients reported that these meals provide half or more of their daily food intake.<sup>2</sup>

Our 2023 research, done in partnership with CUNY's Urban Food Policy Institute, confirmed that these programs leave too many hungry.<sup>3</sup> We surveyed 500 older New Yorkers participating in the City's congregate and home-delivered meals programs to learn more about how they were meeting their food needs beyond the one meal a day they received through these programs. Some key findings include:

- **48% of all respondents “sometimes” or “often” experienced food insecurity.** This number went up to 60% for HDM recipients.
- Affordability was a clear barrier with **65% of respondents living on \$15,000/yr or less.**
- Physical limitations were experienced by many, including those receiving congregate meals: **41% said they are only sometimes or never able to shop for groceries,** and 38% have a limited ability to prepare their own food.
- **45% reported having little to no support** from family, friends, or a personal care attendant.
- **25% of participants don't have internet access and 20% prefer to go online as little as possible,** limiting online shopping opportunities for many.
- Other food programs are underutilized given the depth of need indicated: **only 56% received SNAP and only 18% had used a food pantry.**
- **34% of those receiving SNAP said the benefit was not enough** to meet their needs, and food pantries are not always accessible to homebound older adults.

It's clear that while the daily meal provided by congregate and HDM programs is critical, a wide meal gap remains. Many are unable to access the City's anti-hunger infrastructure due to a limited ability to physically access food pantries or grocery stores and/or the mental and physical difficulties that come from preparing a meal with ingredients from pantries. But the solution is clear too: we must improve our home-delivered and congregate meal programs and invest in innovative new programs that get more food to people in their homes.

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<sup>2</sup> Administration on Community Living. FY18 Older Americans Act Report to Congress. Accessed at: [https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2021-06/ACL\\_FY2018%20OAA%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf](https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2021-06/ACL_FY2018%20OAA%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Aging without Hunger: Ending Food Insecurity for Older New Yorkers by 2040. [https://www.citymeals.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Citymeals%20on%20Wheels\\_AGING%20WITHOUT%20HUNGER\\_2024.pdf](https://www.citymeals.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Citymeals%20on%20Wheels_AGING%20WITHOUT%20HUNGER_2024.pdf)

For more information please contact:

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## **Citymeals' Food Programs**

Citymeals addresses gaps in the City's anti-hunger infrastructure by bringing food directly to older adults who cannot regularly access food in other ways.

### *The HDM Weekend Meals Program in NYC*

The federal Older Americans Act of 1965, which funds HDM and congregate meal programs across the country, only requires them to serve one meal a day, five days a week. HDM programs may choose to provide additional meals using local public or private funding. Across New York State, some counties do provide public funding for meals on weekends, and some even fund a second daily meal.

The solution in the City is a unique public-private model: Citymeals began as a fund within DFTA tasked with raising private dollars to cover the cost of meals for days the program did not operate. This created two funding streams flowing to the same network of contracted nonprofits providing the meals: one stream responsible for the total core program costs (including its overhead) and the other funding just the additional food.

For nearly 45 years, Citymeals has had the privilege of working in partnership with DFTA and the City's contracted HDM providers to ensure that homebound older New Yorkers receive at least one daily meal. In FY25, we infused the program with over 1.4 million weekend meals at a cost of over \$14 million. The overwhelming majority of this funding is private. In FY25 we received \$2.7 million from DFTA (a cost which is offset for the city by a federal reimbursement of 74 cents on the dollar for these meals) and \$500,000 from the City Council for our weekend meals program.

While the return on investment for the City is significant, this model has begun to bow under the pressure of dramatic increases in both the number of older adults needing meals and inflation-driven food costs. Over the years, this has caused the difference between our reimbursement rate and what providers receive from the City has also grown due to the constraints of private fundraising. Today, while the City pays providers \$14.78 per meal, Citymeals pays \$10 per meal.

The administration has recognized the increasing costs of the program, raising its reimbursement rate to contracted providers by about a dollar every year since FY21, increases

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that Citymeals stood with advocates to fight for. But the City's investment in the weekend meals program has remained flat. If Citymeals were to increase our reimbursement rate at the same pace, we would have had to raise an additional \$1.5 million each year, or \$9 million over the past 6 years. We were able to increase our rate by a total of \$4 per meal over this time, but we know this is not enough and the widening gap between the true cost and what we can offer is becoming untenable for providers. Without additional investment from the City, the day may soon come when providers can no longer afford to partner with us for weekend meals.

**In the absence of a greater partnership with the City, we support Int. No. 280 which addresses this issue by expanding the HDM program to provide meals 7 days a week, 365 days a year.** The core program should provide at least one daily meal as this is the most basic need for all program participants. We also ask the council to note the following concerns:

1. Expanding the program must come with the proper amount of funding. Based on our work funding these meals we believe the City should budget for 1.5 – 1.8 million weekend meals at the same reimbursement rate they provide for weekday meals.
2. As written the bill could be interpreted to require that providers deliver meals 7 days a week, which is not how the system operates. Typically, weekend meals are frozen or chilled and delivered during the week along with that day's meal. Requiring providers to deliver meals on weekends would incur additional labor, fuel, and overhead costs beyond the current rate above.

### Emergency Meals Program

Citymeals has been a citywide emergency responder for older adults since 9/11. In 2018, the opening of our Bronx warehouse solidified this role by giving us the capacity to store up to 10,000 packed and ready meals, and enough food to quickly package up to 60,000 more meals. With this level of inventory, we can pre-supply existing program participants with nutritious, shelf-stable meals and respond to those in temporary need during extreme weather, an emergency closure, or a suspension of meal delivery service. We can turn on a dime to reach large numbers of older adults in senior housing facilities, NYCHA housing, or Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), as well as individuals living across the five boroughs. We have stepped up during citywide emergencies like Hurricane Ida, as well as more localized emergencies such as a power or gas outage. Time and again, we have illustrated the value of our agile and resourceful model.

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Finally, in the current RFP, DFTA began to require that contracted HDM providers give an additional meal every month from November through March, to ensure that older adults had some extra food on hand in the event of an emergency. However, no additional funding was included to meet this new requirement. Therefore, Citymeals stepped in to provide that additional meal at no cost to providers.

**In FY25, Citymeals' emergency food program provided 250,146 meals to older adults across the City.** This is what we do, and what we hope to keep doing. Citymeals has the infrastructure and stands ready for the next emergency, provided we can access the additional funding that makes our nimble model possible.

### Supplemental Food Programs and Pilots

To help fill the meal gap for homebound older adults enrolled in the home-delivered meals program, we launched a few new programs in FY25. We have a long-term goal to reach 60% of our current service population (~13,000 recipients) with additional food while increasing choices and diversity of meals where possible. By working closely with the City's case management agencies, we identify meal recipients who are actively experiencing food insecurity and place them into one of the following programs.

Our **Breakfast Box** provides enough food for 30 meals including: staples such as oatmeal, cereal, yogurt, milk, rice, and beans; four frozen meals (eg. breakfast burrito, omelet with potatoes); and, a minimum of seven pounds of fresh produce. This is procured, packaged, and delivered by Citymeals directly to homebound older adults on a monthly basis. Contents rotate monthly or seasonally to offer a variety of food. This year we began to offer a Kosher option. **In FY25 this program provided 381,480 meals to nearly 2,000 HDM recipients.**

Our **Mobile Groceries** program provides a monthly box with enough food for 14 meals, including pantry staples, two frozen meals, and about four pounds of produce. This year we began to offer Halal, Kosher, and Latin options for the frozen meals. The program, which receives funding from the City Council through the Feeding Our Communities Initiative, currently serves 600 HDM recipients citywide. **In FY25, this program provided 44,559 meals to nearly 500 HDM recipients.** We are also running a smaller client-choice pilot program in partnership with the West Side Campaign Against Hunger. This program allows an additional

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200 participants in the Bronx to order their groceries by phone, text, or online, and offers four choices (plant or animal-based proteins and milks, all fresh produce or a mix of fresh and shelf-stable foods). Participants receive enough food for 18 meals, delivered monthly.

These pilot programs are directly in response to the expressed needs of meal recipients and our research demonstrating deep food insecurity.

Finally, our **Shopping Assistance** pilot program provides 50 recipients in East Flatbush, Brooklyn with vouchers worth the equivalent of \$80 a month for three months to be used at two designated local grocery stores. This program addresses food insecurity while offering independence in making food choices that best suit participants' needs while allowing us to learn more about the nutritional needs and practices of older adults. While that pilot has concluded, we are currently building another model to test that pairs each participant with a volunteer who can help with grocery shopping and getting their groceries home.

Citymeals is continually assessing these food programs for impact and improvement.

In 2025, we conducted surveys of our Breakfast Box, Mobile Grocery, and Shopping Assistance Pilot Programs. We learned that:

The *Breakfast Box Program* is showing strong positive outcomes for Citymeals participants:

- 90% said it helps them to have more money to pay bills or necessities.
  - On average, participants estimated saving \$60/month.
- 81% said it helped them manage one or more health conditions.
- 79% reported the program helping them not be hungry.

Early evaluation findings show that the *Mobile Grocery Pilot* is a highly effective intervention that improves food security, reduces hunger and worry, supports independence and health, builds dignity and trust, and reaches some of the most food-insecure older adults in NYC.

- 87% say it reduces anxiety about food.
- 86% reported the program helping them afford rent, utilities, medication.
  - On average, participants estimated saving \$38/month.
- 82% reported eating healthier foods.

The *Shopping Assistance Pilot* also delivered significant, measurable improvements for older adults in East Flatbush facing food insecurity.

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- Severe food insecurity dropped sharply from 40% at the start of the program to 9% at the end of the program.
- Fewer cut or skipped meals.
- Increased purchases of fresh produce, proteins such as meat and fish, and culturally specific food (eg. yucca and yams).

We are so grateful for the support we received in FY25 from the Council which has allowed us to continue to serve older adults during emergencies, and to improve and scale these innovative programs, which are already showing impact. We respectfully request that the Council continue to support our food programs by renewing its discretionary funding:

- \$500,000 for our Emergency Food Programs through the Older Adult Centers, Programs, and Services Initiative;
- \$600,000 for our food programs through the Feeding Our Communities Initiative; and,
- \$50,000 for our food programs through the Food Pantries Initiative.

### **Sector-Wide Needs**

New York City simply does not prioritize the services and programs that help older adults age in place, demonstrated by long-standing underinvestment in these services. Aging in place is the best strategy for older adults and for New York City, and that means ensuring that we have a robust home and community based services infrastructure in place. An older adult should never have to be placed in a nursing home simply because they cannot access enough food to remain healthy at home.

Along with our partners, we call upon the City Council to prioritize older adults in the FY27 budget by:

- **Investing \$90 million in the congregate and home-delivered meals programs, both of which continue to face steep increases in program costs due to high inflation rates and years of underfunding.**
  - Pass Intro 280, which would require the City's home-delivered meals program to provide a meal 365 days a year, with adequate funding included in the budget.
  - Increase per meal reimbursement rates for HDM from \$14.78 to \$16.17/meal.
  - Increase funding for congregate meals by \$60 million.
- **Increase Community Food Connection funding to a permanent baseline of \$100 million** to provide sustained, flexible support for more than 500 pantries and community food providers serving over 1 million New Yorkers.

For more information please contact:

Jeanette Estima, Director, Policy & Advocacy, Citymeals on Wheels, [jeanette@citymeals.org](mailto:jeanette@citymeals.org)

## **Conclusion**

It is critical that the City adequately support more programs that get food directly to older adults. Citymeals works hand-in-hand with congregate and HDM providers to ensure that older adults are able to eat at the very least one meal every day, but more is needed. Older adults must no longer be an afterthought in the development of anti-hunger strategies. We need to look at the City's food programs and do more to ensure that they are accessible to older adults and present a comprehensive approach to hunger.

For more information please contact:

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# COUNCIL OF PEOPLES ORGANIZATION

IT'S ALL ABOUT PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE  
WWW.COPO.ORG

Testimony to the New York City Council

Committee on Aging

March 12, 2026

Thank you, Chair Susan Zhuang, and Chair Members Shirley Aldebol, Gale A. Brewer, Eric Dinowitz, Crystal Hudson, Christopher Marte, and Darlene Mealy for holding this hearing and for giving us the opportunity to testify.

My name is Mohammad Razvi, and I am the Founder and CEO of the Council of People's Organization (COPO). At COPO, it's about *people helping people*. Each year, COPO serves more than 65,000 New Yorkers. Our organization provides immigration legal services, case management, and critical social support to immigrant families across New York City, helping them navigate complex legal systems, access resources, and secure safety and stability.

COPO also operates the first Halal Meals on Wheels program in the United States, providing culturally appropriate halal meals to community members in need. This program serves approximately 30,000 meals annually, and our kitchen has the capacity to prepare meals for 100 people per pot, cooking meals two to three times daily and producing up to 1,000 meals per day.

At the same time, COPO operates Older Adult Centers (OACs) that play a vital role in supporting seniors in our community. These centers provide a lifeline for older adults by offering congregate meals, social engagement, and access to services that help reduce isolation and improve overall well-being. Many of the older adults we serve are immigrants, low-income, or individuals who do not qualify for Medicare but still require support to maintain their health and quality of life.

Through COPO's NYC Aging Case Management Program, we serve Brooklyn Community Districts 2, 6, and 7, and we support our older adults through our Older Adult Center programs. Our case management services assist older adults in accessing health insurance and public benefits, navigating social services and community resources, and maintaining their independence and quality of life. An on-site nurse supports seniors by monitoring blood pressure and weight, identifying health concerns, and connecting clients to appropriate care. COPO operates two Older Adult Center locations, at 1075 Coney Island Avenue and 1814 Coney Island Avenue.

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Brooklyn, NY 11230

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Fax (718) 859-2266  
E-mail: [info@copo.org](mailto:info@copo.org)

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Through our case management program, we see the growing demand for help among older adults, particularly for home care and other supportive services. We currently maintain a waitlist for older adults seeking these services, and the opening for this type of care is limited to a maximum of three spots per month, despite serving over 1,200 older adults across all our NYC Aging programs.

We are also seeing a high demand for mental health support. COPO provides free mental health services to older adults through two on-site therapists, but even with these dedicated staff, the number of older adults seeking help continues to overwhelm our capacity, creating a waitlist for seniors who need these critical services. This demonstrates the urgent need for expanded resources and funding to meet both physical and mental health needs in our older adult community.

Last Thursday, March 5th, 2026 our OAC hosted a community Iftar where more than 70 older adults came together to enjoy a meal. Regardless of religion or ethnicity, everyone was welcomed. Council Member Susan Zhuang joined us and witnessed firsthand the importance of these gatherings in reducing isolation and building community among seniors.

Additionally, through our annual turkey distribution event, we provide more than 4,000 turkeys and chickens to community members in need.

As demand grows and waitlists continue to expand, current funding levels are not sufficient. We respectfully urge the City Council to increase funding for NYC Aging, enabling Older Adult Centers like ours to expand services, provide more meals, increase mental health and home care support, and ensure that seniors—especially those who are vulnerable and uninsured—can age with dignity, support, and connection. Our older adults built our communities, and they deserve access to nutritious meals, social connection, and the services that help them remain active and engaged.

Thank you for your time and for your continued support of New York City's older adults.

Mohammad Razvi  
CEO/ Chaplain

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# Council of Peoples Organization



## ATTENTION: COMMUNITY ELDERERS AGED 60 YEARS AND ABOVE

**COPO CAN ASSIST YOU WITH MANY SERVICES YOU MAY NEED**

**FREE IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES** **ALL SERVICES ARE FREE**



FOR HELP, COME WALK IN,  
OR CONTACT

**MOHAMMAD RAZVI**

**PH: 718-434-3266**

**1077 CONEY ISLAND AVE., BROOKLYN, NY**

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**HOME DELIVERED  
GROCERIES**

**COPO HAS QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS TO HELP YOU  
OR YOUR SENIORS QUALIFY FOR THE ENTITLEMENTS**

**ESL CLASSES**

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**CASE  
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**MEDICAID**

**YOGA CLASSES**

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Twice a Month

**GYM**



**HOME CARE SERVICES CAN BE PROVIDED BY YOUR OWN  
FAMILY MEMBERS (DAUGHTER, SON OR ANY RELATIVE)**

**NYC** Department for the Aging **DFTA** Funded Program

**1077 CONEY ISLAND AVENUE,  
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11230**

**PH: 718-434-3266**



Council of Peoples Organization



کونسل آف پیپلز آرگنائزیشن

کیونٹی کے 60 سال یا زیادہ عمر کے ارکان کیلئے اہم اعلان

تمام  
خدمات  
فری

”کو پو“ سروسز کی فراہمی میں آپ کی مدد کر سکتی ہے

مدد کے لئے COPO کے دفتر میں تشریف لائیں  
یا درج ذیل نمبر پر محمد رضوی سے رابطہ کریں

718-434-3266

1077 Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

سوموار سے جمعہ کے درمیان (صبح 9 سے 5 بجے تک)



COPO کے تربیت یافتہ سوشل ورکرز آپ کو یا آپ کے خاندان کے بزرگوں کو درج ذیل خدمات Entitlement کے حصول میں مدد دے سکتے ہیں

امیگریشن کیلئے قانونی امداد

اوسری ہوم ڈیلیوری

کلاسیں انگلش  
سیٹیزن شپ امتحان کی تیاری

سواری کی سہولت

گھر پر کھانے کی فراہمی

گھر کا کرایہ

فوڈ سٹمپ (SNAP)

کیس مینجمنٹ

میڈی کیڈ

فری یوگا کلاسیں

ذہنی صحت کی کونسلنگ

رجسٹرڈ نرس  
(مہینے میں 2 بار چیک اپ)

سینئرز کیلئے فری جم



آپ کی دیکھ بھال (ہوم کیئر) کیلئے آپ کے ہی کے کسی عزیز (بیٹا، بیٹی یا رشتہ دار) کو  
آپ کے گھر پر ملازمت دی جاسکتی ہے۔ اس طرح آپ کا عزیز گھر بیٹھے پیسے کما سکتا ہے

NYC Department for the Aging DFTA Funded Program

1077 CONEY ISLAND AVENUE,  
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11230

PH: 718-434-3266





**New York City FY27 Preliminary Budget Hearing  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Susan Zhuang, Chair**

**Testimony of Rich Baum, President and CEO of Educational Alliance**

**March 12, 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the NYC Aging budget. Educational Alliance is a settlement house with community centers located throughout Lower Manhattan offering individuals and families high-quality, multi-generational programs and services that enhance their well-being and socioeconomic opportunities.

Educational Alliance operates three sites supported by contracts with NYC Aging: Weinberg Older Adult Center (OAC), the Cooperative Village Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) and Sirovich OAC. Together, these sites serve a highly diverse population of close to 4,000 older adults annually.

Many of our members are low-income and rely on the meals and resources we provide to make ends meet. We prioritize having multilingual social workers who are fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian, and Spanish, who can connect older adults from all backgrounds with healthcare, benefits, and neighborhood supports. Our case workers help clients schedule doctor's appointments and secure food and housing benefits, while program staff offer thousands of hours of programming — from tap dancing to Chinese bead work — that foster connection and skill-building. As New York City's older adult population continues to grow, we urge the City to expand its investment in the services that allow New Yorkers to age in their own communities.

**Congregate Meals**

Our community members rely on us for meals — for many, what they receive at our centers is their primary nutrition for the day. Yet food costs continue to rise with no corresponding increase in funding, straining our ability to provide nutritious meals to all who need them. Educational Alliance covers the cost of every meal served beyond our contracted amount, but as prices climb this has become a significant and growing financial burden.

We know that much more is needed. Participation in our meal programs has steadily increased, to the point that we increasingly are forced to turn people away from meal service due to capacity limits. In FY25 our Weinberg Center was contracted to serve 15,000 breakfasts and 35,000 lunches throughout the course of the year. In actuality, we served over 22,000 breakfasts and over 38,000 lunches, an increase over the contracted amount of 148% and 110% respectively. Likewise, our Sirovich Center is seeing a steady increase in meal attendance — over the past 12 months Sirovich has served 10,000 more meals than in the previous 12-month period. It is clear that with additional resources we could serve many more than we do.

**You belong here.**

Educational Alliance | 197 East Broadway, New York, NY 10002 | [edalliance.org](http://edalliance.org)

**To meet the increased demand for meals, the City should:**

- **Increase congregate meal budgets at older adult centers by \$60 million to meet growing food costs and rising demand.**

**NORCs**

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) help older adults age in their own homes, in the buildings and neighborhoods they have lived for years, sometimes decades. Educational Alliance proudly provides NORC services to three large co-ops on Manhattan's Lower East Side: Seward, East River, and Hillman, serving approximately 500 older adults. Our program offers thousands of hours of social work, nursing, and programming — from blood pressure screenings, fall prevention, and elder law workshops to meditation, jewelry-making, painting, and weekly film screenings — fostering community connection, socialization, and civic engagement.

Nursing services are a critical but underfunded component of our NORC program. NORC nurses serve as first responders for residents, working alongside social workers to address medical and social-behavioral needs. Through comprehensive wrap-around care, they support frail and homebound clients in remaining in their homes with the appropriate level of support — yet contracts do not fully cover these costs.

**With the success and cost-effectiveness of the NORC program model, the City should:**

- **Invest \$10 million to expand the number of NORCs to ensure there is a NORC in every neighborhood.**
- **Baseline long-standing NORC nursing support that is part of the City Council's NORC Initiative of approximately \$1 million.**

**Capital Funding**

Many aging services, whether they are older adult centers or Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities or other programs, operate in buildings with poor conditions, such as leaking ceilings, broken HVAC systems, and outdated kitchens. These poor conditions often take an extremely long time to be addressed by agencies, or aren't addressed at all. At Educational Alliance's Sirovich Center, programs operate in a City-owned building that is leased by another non-profit, and we operate as a sub-lease tenant. The building requires significant repairs and upgrades to major systems, including the fire control panel, boiler, HVAC, roof, windows, plumbing, floors, and ceilings.

Because the building is City-owned, all repair work is subject to complex procurement rules. We follow up regularly with both the leasing non-profit and the City agency that owns the building, but as a sub-lease tenant, we do not have the authority to obtain quotes or move projects forward independently. Despite this, we are held accountable for building conditions and regularly receive citations from NYC Aging during audits for issues that are entirely beyond our control.

The older adults who rely on our centers deserve spaces that are welcoming, safe, and well-maintained. Yet beyond the major system needs described above, significant cosmetic disrepair can be seen in our program spaces at Sirovich— with peeling paint visible, and walls in need of a full remodel. Our multi-purpose spaces serve hundreds of people each week, transforming throughout the day to accommodate meal service, fitness and movement classes, and community gatherings. This intensive



daily use takes a real toll. New flooring, electrical upgrades, updated seating, stairway railings and improved lighting are needed across both older adult centers, at a cost we estimate at no less than \$200,000 — and one we cannot meet without capital support.

**To ensure older adult programs can operate in safe and accessible spaces, the City should:**

- **Invest in aging program centers across New York City by expanding the emergency capital infrastructure fund for older adult centers to \$10 million.**

**Increase funding to hire more case managers to support with caseloads and staffing.** Social workers and case workers help older adults access benefits, social services, and more. However, with more older adults needing support, caseloads have become unsustainable. At Educational Alliance, our social services staff have an average caseload of 50 individuals. The NORC, specifically, has a waiting list for high-need cases such as those who are homebound and have complex health and mental health needs and limited support from family. Because we serve a highly diverse population across our sites, we need social services staff who are fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian, and Spanish.

**To help us better accommodate the increased demand for these services, the City should:**

- **Increase funding to allow us to hire additional social workers and case workers so we can expand case management support and ensure older adults receive the quality, comprehensive support they need.**

**Maintain Council Aging Initiative Funding.** City Council discretionary funding for aging services is foundational to the work we do. EA's staff and members are grateful for your support, which sustains our programs' operation. Funds allocated to our OACs help us cover expenses not funded by our NYC Aging contracts including \$30,000 worth of food; \$36,200 in salaries for kitchen and program personnel; \$14,000 worth of program and building supplies; and \$3,000 for meaningful trip experiences for our members.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments. For any follow-up questions, I can be reached at [rbaum@edalliance.org](mailto:rbaum@edalliance.org).

## **Department of Aging - Thursday, March 12, 2026**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen- Distinguished Chair Person of the NYC Department of Aging, Council member Susan Zhuang and members of the City Council.

My name is Joseph Rizzi, Director of External Affairs for the Federation of Italian American Organizations of Brooklyn and I bring warm greetings from our Chairman of the Board Mr. Jack Spatola and the entire Board, staff and thousands of members of our diverse community who use the Federation's services.

Thanks to the NORC's Initiative (Naturally Occurring Retired Community) FIAO has been able to provide quality service, two days per week, to the Older Adult population. Our participants are provided with a complete program that includes use of a state-of-the-art wellness center, swimming, chair yoga, arts and crafts, bingo, Zumba, mental health and meals. It serves 100 older adults each day (Thursday and Friday) with many on the waiting list. We have the numbers and capabilities to provide this program for five days, if funding would be made available.

In addition, our Older Adult Community, during the course of the year, has an opportunity to participate in the many Multi Cultural Events which include: Lunar New Year, Italian Heritage and Culture, Hispanic Culture, Eid al-Fitr, Black Heritage, as well as Senior Proms and many others.

(SOME OF YOU (Council members Susan Zhuang, Alexa Aviles, David Carr, Frank Morano..... HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTECIPATE AND WITNESS THE EVENTS THAT I JUST ENUMERATED AND THE ENTHUSIASIM OF ALL PARTECIPANTS)

These services provide the Older Adults, most of whom are alone, widowed and in need of support, with the opportunity, to come to a welcoming place and feel like members of an extended family with a purpose in life and an opportunity to be productive members of their community.

FIAO respectfully requests to be put on the NORC Initiative while waiting for the Department of Aging to promulgate the next RFP's allowing other CBO's like ours to apply for funding.

On behalf of the Older Adult Community that FIAO serves, we thank you for all the leadership and support you have provided thus far and for the future financial support you will be able to provide to serve all of those on the waiting list and for FIVE days per week.

My name is Kalman Bokow and I am the Development Manager at India Home. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. India Home is a leading nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the unique needs of older adults from South Asian and other immigrant communities across New York City. Since our founding in 2007, we have provided culturally appropriate services—including congregate meals, case management, mental health programs, and recreational activities—to thousands of older adults. Our work ensures that immigrant seniors, often underserved and isolated, have access to the critical resources they need to age with dignity in their communities.

Aging services in New York are unprepared to support seniors in the coming years. Community-based aging organizations, such as India Home, are crucial to supporting older adults. As part of LiveOn NY, we support the AgeStrong \$2.3 billion multi-year campaign, including \$500 million for Older Adults Centers, \$10 million to support a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community in every neighborhood, \$90 million for nutritional support, and deeper collaboration between NYC Aging and HPD.

Older adult New Yorkers rely on critical aging services, including OACs, because of their convenience and proximity to their neighborhoods. Many of our clients at India Home rely on our centers for their only hot meal of the day, essential case management services, and critical social interaction to combat isolation. The impact of not investing in New York's aging services will fall disproportionately on immigrant seniors, who already face systemic barriers to accessing mainstream aging services due to language, cultural, and financial constraints. The AgeStrong approach will ensure that older adults have access to safe and affordable housing and robust community-based services that are essential to healthy, dignified aging.

We urge you to commit to a robust increase in funding for older adult services, so that New York's seniors can age in place with dignity. Thank you for your time and for this valuable opportunity to testify.



**New York City Council  
Committee on Aging  
Preliminary Budget Hearing FY27**

**March 16, 2026**

Thank you, Chair Zhuang, Finance Committee Chair Lee, and members of the Committees on Aging for the opportunity to submit testimony.

JASA is a not-for-profit agency that honors older New Yorkers as vital members of society, providing services that support aging with purpose and partnering to build strong communities. For nearly sixty years, JASA has served as one of New York's largest and most trusted agencies serving older adults in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. JASA has a comprehensive, integrated network of services that promotes independence, safety, wellness, community participation, and quality of life for New York City's older adults. These programs reach more than 40,000 older adults from diverse backgrounds and include home care, case management, older adult centers, NORC supportive services, home-delivered meals, caregiver support, continuing education, licensed mental health services, senior housing, advocacy, legal services, adult protective services, and guardianship. JASA also has an extensive history of providing information and referral services and benefits and entitlements assistance to ensure older New Yorkers are aware of and take advantage of the vast array of available services.

JASA's mission is to sustain and enrich the lives of older adults so that they can remain in the community, with dignity and autonomy. Inherent in our mission is advancing an age-friendly New York, identifying the needs of our clients and members, and working with the City to foster an environment where older adults are valued, included, and able to thrive. In order to fulfill our mission, JASA depends on an extraordinary workforce of dedicated professionals. We were encouraged to see a commitment to wage increases in FY25 and FY26 and expect the City will fulfill its promise of COLAs in FY27.

New York's older adult population is projected to grow by 25% by 2040, however, the NYC Aging budget has remained relatively flat and accounts for less than half of one percent of the City's budget. The impact of this underinvestment is already visible: older adults are now the fastest-growing group experiencing homelessness in New York City. This alarming trend underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support. JASA stands in solidarity with our colleagues in Age Strong NYC and calls on the City to address these decades of neglect with strategic investment to ensure older adults have access to nutritious meals, safe and affordable housing, and strong community-based services—three fundamental pillars of healthy, dignified aging.

Considering NYC Aging's already constrained budget and the projected growth in the older adult population it serves, the agency should be exempt from any citywide cost-savings measures to help protect increasingly vulnerable adults.

### **Nutrition**

Older adults should not be compelled to choose between affording adequate nutrition and other essential necessities. The City Council has expressed strong support for expanding meal programs to seven days per week, and JASA shares this goal. It is critical that this expansion be accompanied by sufficient funding so that providers have the resources needed to implement it effectively and sustainably. Expanding services without the necessary funding risks creating an unfunded mandate that would place additional strain on already stretched service providers.

Furthermore, funding must be allocated to broaden food choices at older adult centers, including breakfast and grab-and-go options, alongside strengthened Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach efforts. Together, these investments will help ensure that older adults across New York City have consistent access to nutritious food and the support they need to remain healthy and independent.

### **Housing**

New York City must establish a real pathway to safe, affordable housing for older residents. This includes accelerating the development of senior housing under programs like SARA, preserving existing affordable housing (particularly within HUD 202 buildings) and expanding rental assistance programs such as SCRIE to help older New Yorkers manage soaring rents. Many older adults are still unaware of these beneficial programs, and learn about rent freezes after they are already struggling to pay their ever-growing rent. A targeted information campaign and enhanced coordination among City agencies could substantially increase the enrollment of older adults in this crucial program.

## **Community Services and Spaces**

Strong community-based services are essential to combating social isolation, which remains one of the most significant threats to the health and well-being of older adults. New York's aging population is diverse across cultures, languages, and generations. Older adults in their 60s, 70s, 80s, and beyond often seek different kinds of engagement, and cultural communities may value different forms of programming and connection.

To meet these realities, Older Adult Centers require increased and flexible funding to support a wider range of activities and programming that reflect the interests, cultures, and life stages of the communities they serve. Investing in diverse and responsive programming strengthens social connection, promotes health and independence, and ensures that centers remain welcoming and relevant hubs for older New Yorkers.

In addition, many older adult centers operate in aging buildings with deteriorating infrastructure and outdated HVAC systems, making them increasingly difficult to maintain and, at times, unsuitable for the very people they are meant to serve. Without consistent capital and expense funding, community-based organizations cannot sustain the critical programs that older adults rely on every day. Last year, the budget included \$5 million to address emergency repairs to older adult centers citywide. This funding was helpful and allowed providers to begin addressing urgent facility needs. However, many centers still require significant investments to remain safe, accessible, and welcoming spaces for participants.

To continue this important work, JASA urges the City to include \$10 million in this year's budget to support capital repairs and upgrades for older adult centers. These investments will help address basic infrastructure needs, including HVAC systems, accessibility improvements, and other critical building repairs, and ensure that centers across the city can continue serving as vital hubs for social connection, nutrition, and supportive services for thousands of older New Yorkers.

JASA also urges the City to increase funding to support additional NORC Supportive Service Programs. As New York City's older adult population continues to grow, more buildings and neighborhoods across the five boroughs are naturally becoming retirement communities. With appropriate financial support, these communities can provide critical services that allow older adults to age safely and with dignity in their own homes. By strengthening support for NORCs, New York City has the opportunity to be a national leader and model for aging-in-place initiatives while helping to prevent unnecessary and costly institutionalization.

## **Conclusion**



New York City has a pivotal opportunity to make a transformative investment in services for older New Yorkers. Our city should set the standard for aging-in-place, but that requires bold action. The City Council provides critical support to the human services sector and aging services providers, and we thank you for your continued partnership and dedication to protecting and uplifting New York's aging population.

Molly Krakowski  
Senior Director Government Affairs  
JASA  
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**MET  
COUNCIL**

Feeding the hungry. Serving the poor.  
Changing lives.

## **New York City Council Committee on Aging Preliminary Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2027**

Chair Zhuang, and fellow members of the New York City Council Committee on Aging,

Thank you for holding this hearing on the New York City FY27 Preliminary Budget. We are writing testimony on behalf of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) to join other providers across the City in calling for improved access to affordable housing through older adults across the city, as well as increased mental health and legal supports. The Department for the Aging (DFTA) provides essential support to Met Council's Geriatrics programs, which promote healthy aging among New York City's aging population.

For over 50 years Met Council has been one of America's largest Jewish charities dedicated to fighting poverty. We operate ten departments ranging from 100 percent affordable housing to our award-winning family violence program to comprehensive Holocaust Survivor assistance, geriatrics programs, crisis intervention, and the country's largest kosher emergency food network. Met Council provides a wide array of support to over 320,000 New Yorkers annually. **Our Geriatrics Team serves over 3,000 older adults through our Elder Abuse Prevention Program, Caregiver Support Program, Holocaust Survivor Program, and Senior Repair program.** In addition, we provide case assistance and food pantry coordination for older adults in our inclusionary buildings to support healthy aging-in-place. We work closely with DFTA-funded Older Adult Centers, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC), Home-Delivered Meals providers, and Case Management programs to connect our older clients to vital services. Our Elder Abuse Prevention Program utilizes Older Adult Centers as part of safety planning for isolated older clients who are actively experiencing abuse and may need a place to feel safe and connect to a larger support network.

Approximately 21 percent of New Yorkers are older adults, yet only 0.5 percent of the City's budget is allocated to older adult services.<sup>i</sup> Older adults are also disproportionately impacted by poverty. In 2023, over **21 percent of New York City seniors lived in poverty, and over 61 percent of older tenants were rent burdened.**<sup>ii</sup> The older adult population is growing rapidly, and the support needed to age in place, maintain healthy bodies and minds, and protect themselves from abuse, remain insufficient. It is essential that the City Council invest in the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of older adults from all walks of life.

We join other providers and advocates in older adult services in requesting that the City Council **commit \$250 million for expanding and improving the Senior Rental Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program.** Many older adults live on fixed incomes, and rising housing costs often leave them vulnerable to eviction, homelessness, or unsafe living conditions. Currently, the SCRIE program provides valuable support to housing-insecure seniors, but more needs to be done.

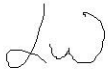
In recent years, our Geriatrics Team has seen increases in housing insecurity with their clients, impacting their ability to age in place and causing greater strain on those who care for them. This insecurity is known to have adverse impacts on other aspects of an individual's life, including increased stress levels, poorer overall health status, reduced access to health care, and negative effects on mental well-being, including higher rates of depression and anxiety.<sup>iii</sup> The SCRIE income eligibility limit of \$50,000 annually has been stagnant for over a decade and is not reflective of the cost of living in New York City.<sup>ii</sup> It is essential that SCRIE income eligibility caps increase to reflect the annual Social Security Cost of Living Increases. Currently, modest annual Social Security increases can result in disqualification for older adults, putting their housing in jeopardy. Expanding housing support programs and modernizing income requirements would lift thousands of seniors out of housing insecurity, support aging in place, and improve health outcomes.

Elder abuse and its consequences remain critically underexamined in conversations about the well-being of older New Yorkers. Nearly 15 percent of older New Yorkers reported being a victim of elder abuse, yet the systems meant to protect them remain inadequate.<sup>iv</sup> **Met Council's Geriatrics Team routinely works with clients who are in an unsafe housing situation caused by abuse at the hands of a relative or caregiver.** These clients are frequently homeowners but face a legal dilemma: they cannot evict their abusers, who continue to live with them, because existing tenant protections offer limited mechanisms for doing so. Additionally, many victims have fixed incomes or have suffered financial abuse that strips them of resources they might otherwise use to seek help. The result is an aging population with no legal recourse, no safe path forward, and no meaningful support from the City. It is vital that the City Council prioritizes targeted investment in legal assistance and other wrap around services that allow older adults to remain safely in their homes without sacrificing the tenant protections that all New Yorkers depend on.

Older New Yorkers are also particularly vulnerable to cognitive decline and growing negative mental health issues. It is estimated that more than 20 percent of older adults experience some variety of mental health condition, with the most common being anxiety and depression. Social isolation, chronic health conditions, and decreased cognitive functioning all contribute to the regularity of mental health conditions in older adults. As New York City continues to age, it is vital that systems are in place to both provide and enable older adults to access the appropriate mental health services. Older Adult Centers provide critical support for the general well-being of older adults, including mental health care. Across the city, older adult centers are in desperate need of repairs to both maintain services and improve accessibility. **We request that this committee commit \$5 million to continue the Council's funding for improvements to older adult centers across the city.** This funding is essential to keep these centers operating and to support the communities of older adults that rely on them.

We thank you for taking the time to review our testimony, and we hope to continue to work with this committee and the New York City Council to meet the needs of older New Yorkers.

Thank you,



Lillian Wu, LMSW

Director of Geriatrics Programs

Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

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<sup>i</sup> LiveOn NY, "Age Strong NYC & NYS," LiveOn NY, accessed March 11, 2026, <https://www.liveon-ny.org/age-strong>.

<sup>ii</sup> Thomas P. DiNapoli, "DiNapoli: More Older Adults Calling NYC Home Than Ever Before, Comptroller's Report Finds," Office of the New York State Comptroller, January 16, 2025, <https://www.osc.ny.gov/press/releases/2025/01/dinapoli-more-older-adults-calling-nyc-home-ever-comptrollers-report-finds>.

<sup>iii</sup> Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "Housing Instability," Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed March 11, 2026, <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/housing-instability>.

<sup>iv</sup> NYC Department for the Aging, The State of Older New Yorkers: Building an Age-Inclusive Future (New York: NYC Department for the Aging, 2025), <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dfta/downloads/pdf/news-reports/the-state-of-older-new-yorkers-2025-v2.pdf>.

**New York City Council Committee on Aging, Age Strong New York, March 12, 2026 at 12:30 pm**

Good afternoon. I am Linda Hoffman, President of New York Foundation for Senior Citizens. On behalf of our Board of Directors, we would deeply appreciate your ensuring the continuation of our Home Sharing and Respite Care Program by supporting the provision of \$500,000 from the Speaker's City-Wide Budget, allocations of \$25,000 from your individual and \$25,000 from your borough delegations' discretionary budgets within the next City Budget.

Our program provides the only services of their types in New York City.

Our free home sharing service is implemented by Social Workers who use their professional skills to successfully match older adult "hosts" with extra space in their apartments and houses to share with responsible, compatible "guests" in need of affordable housing. One of the "matchmates" must be age 60 or over.

During the first eight months of fiscal year 2026, the program has already matched 74 hosts and guests in 37 home sharing arrangements. At this rate, the program is on its way to exceeding last year's record of matching 100 hosts and guests in 50 shared living arrangements at the one-time cost of \$3,991 for each host and guest matched.

Our respite care service is also implemented by professional Social Workers. They arrange affordable, short-term, in-home care at the low cost of \$19.65 per hour, paid directly to the home care workers by the frail elderly, who are attempting to manage at home alone or with the help of others, and, thereby, prevent their need for nursing home care.

Although the cost of private agency home care is \$30 per hour, our respite care service provides the lowest cost, highest quality home care at \$19.10 per hour and free of charge under emergency circumstances.

During the past 45 years, we have provided over 12,332 frail older adults and many more thousands of their caregivers with respite care services plus jobs for hundreds of Certified Home Health Aides. The one time, per person cost of providing respite care services is only \$553 per person.

Findings from our study of the July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 fiscal year demonstrate that New York City provided our Home Sharing and Respite Care Program with a total of \$200,000. In turn, the program saved New York City \$1,767,231.75 in Medicaid expenses by preventing the need for institutionalization.

Along with providing the City significant annual savings in Medicaid and other expenses, our home sharing and respite care services: enable the City's older adults to maintain and remain in their homes, obtain affordable housing, prevent feelings of isolation and loneliness and prevent institutionalization in nursing homes and homeless shelters, provide jobs for Home Health Aides.

Our program is totally dependent upon government refunding, each and every fiscal year, to continue to fulfill its ever-increasing number of requests for its services. To ensure that the program remains fiscally viable throughout each fiscal year, our program must receive sufficient New York City Budget and privately raised funds to cobble together with New York State Budget funding.

To continue our program, city-wide, requires \$500,000 from the Speaker's City-wide Budget, allocations of \$25,000 from your individual and \$25,000 from your borough delegations' discretionary budgets within the City's next budget.

Thank you very much, in advance, for hopefully providing these desperately needed funds.



## **Testimony by New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)**

### **Before the NYC Council Committee on Aging regarding:**

#### **Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026, the Preliminary Capital Plan for Years 2027-2030, and the Fiscal 2029 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report**

**March 12, 2025**

Chair Zhuang, Council Members and staff, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee on Aging regarding the FY27 Preliminary Budget. NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers in need combat social, racial, and economic injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence survivors, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, low-income members of the LGBTQ community, Holocaust survivors, veterans, as well as others in need of free legal services.

Many of NYLAG's practice areas serve older New Yorkers, helping them to age with dignity in their homes, access needed care and benefits, protect them from abuse, and preserve generational wealth. This includes: LegalHealth, the nation's largest medical-legal partnership that provides general legal assistance in the healthcare setting to patients in 38 hospitals and community health facilities; the Evelyn Frank Legal Resources Program (EFLRP), which advocates for low-income older New Yorkers and individuals with disabilities who need Medicaid services remain in their home and avoid institutionalization; and our Elder Law practice within NYLAG's Public Benefits Unit which assists with issues such as life planning, guardianship, elder abuse prevention, and the distribution of property. Additionally, NYLAG provides legal services on a range of issues impacting older adults, including SNAP and other public benefits and eviction prevention.

We are thankful for the Council's continued investment in our older New Yorkers. Today, we are submitting testimony to ask for your continued investment in critical programs that allow the aging community to continue to participate in their communities. We would like to highlight NYLAG's FY27 discretionary funding requests that impact older New Yorkers. These include support for our legal services for caregivers project, Project Assist, through Support Our Older Adults as well as services provided through the Estate Planning Initiative.

**Project Assist:** NYLAG's Project Assist provides legal support to family caregivers in NYC, with the goal of improving the quality of life for older adults, adults with disabilities, and their family caregivers. We achieve this goal through two objectives 1) using advance directives

to enable caregivers of older adults with diminished capacity to make decisions on behalf of their loved ones, and 2) increasing household stability by connecting household members to public benefits, preventing eviction, and ensuring continuity of the caregivers' employment despite their caregiving responsibilities.

Project Assist responds to the caregiver landscape and needs in NYC: the NYC Department for the Aging reports that 1.3 million residents, mostly older women, serve as caregivers for household members. State-wide, there are 2.2 million family caregivers paying, on average, 20% of their income on caregiving. Dedicating 30 weekly hours to this service, likely while also having additional employment, caregivers often lack awareness of, or energy to pursue, legal resources that can ease their and their loved ones' physical, emotional, and financial burdens. Some may also not know that they qualify as caregivers and are eligible for support services, in effect having to pay for essential supplies with their own money rather than government-provided funds. Still, others experience disruptions in their employment due to having to take time off, sometimes unpaid, to care for their relatives. Caregivers usually seek assistance with securing the legal authority to make critical decisions for loved ones with diminished or absent capacity, and with securing benefits to improve their household stability. In a few short years, Project Assist has helped hundreds of older adults or their caregivers, improving overall household stability. Legal matters most often handled through Project Assist are advance planning and guardianship. We also assist clients with establishing Medicaid Supplemental Needs Trusts, assessing pathways to stable immigration status, and providing advocacy on tenants' rights.

**Estate Planning:** New York's 65 and over population is at a record high and experiencing financial instability at unprecedented rates. A recent report from the Center for an Urban Future found that almost 60% of New Yorkers over 70 reported having no retirement income and that the percentage of older adults living in poverty has increased by almost 41% over the last decade. As a provider of free civil legal services, NYLAG seeks to empower older adults to age in place with dignity and support through comprehensive assistance with key issues for older adults including elder abuse prevention, access to health care and caregiver supports through Medicaid and Medicare, and legal planning that maximizes autonomy and reduces the need for guardianships, including medical and financial advance directives. By assisting with last wills and estates, we help older New Yorkers and their families preserve homeownership across generations. NYLAG has provided legal assistance to over 15,000 adults 60 and over during the last year, with issues ranging from accessing health care coverage and public benefits, creating advance planning and estate documents and elder abuse prevention

Planning in advance is key for preserving access to care and reducing the risk of caregiver burnout. A recent State Comptroller report showed that 1/3 of older New Yorkers are living with a disability. With the end of COVID-era easements, strict financial documentation is required to apply for and renew Medicaid, the primary source of free long-term care and the absence of well-drafted authorizations can be a significant hurdle for struggling caregivers. Powers of attorney, health care proxies and wills help older adults plan for their future care, ensure that they have trusted individuals who are empowered to advocate on their behalf, minimize the need for costly and stressful guardianships and preserve their homes for the next generation.

Legal planning documents also help prevent the risk of potential financial exploitation. Advance directives prepared with thorough legal counseling that includes screening for potential coercion or elder abuse can be tailored to reflect the older adult's specific wishes, concerns, and



safeguards, including limiting authority where appropriate or exploring alternatives. This approach centers the older adult's autonomy and reinforces informed, voluntary decision-making, while reducing the risk of abuse when authorizations are created following cognitive decline or a medical crisis. Last wills reduce the risk of predatory speculation and deed fraud that can cause the loss of homeownership.

Many older adults fail to prepare to plan for future incapacity and prepare wills due to lack of knowledge, language barriers, inability to afford private elder law fees, and mobility impairments. Over the last year, NYLAG attorneys provided community education to over a thousand community members and trained more than 170 professionals on advance planning and access to key supports for older adults, and their caregivers, including health care and other benefits. We partnered with the City Council Speaker's office, community-based organizations and local law firms to provide free estate planning clinics in to low-income adults at local sites or with free private transportation.

NYLAG is committed to expanding outreach and helping more low-income older New Yorkers document their wishes and safeguard their property with legal planning. The need for free and accessible elder law services is higher than ever and expansive federal budget cuts are threatening the financial stability and supports of older residents. . We are always looking for partnerships and opportunities to expand our reach.

**Additional Investments in Older Adults:** NYLAG joins our colleagues from agencies across NYC in advocating for: \$500 million to expanded nutrition services, \$1 billion for affordable housing, and \$800 million for community services. These investments ensure our older New Yorkers can continue to live well in our City.



## Testimony from Selfhelp Community Services

### Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Aging

### FY2027 Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 12, 2026

Selfhelp Community Services respectfully submits testimony regarding the FY 2027 Preliminary Budget. For nearly 90 years, Selfhelp has supported older New Yorkers—including Holocaust survivors, immigrants, and low-income older adults—so they can live with dignity and independence in their homes and communities. We appreciate the Council’s longstanding commitment to older adults and the community-based organizations that serve them.

Selfhelp strongly supports LiveOn NY’s AgeStrong NYC Campaign and urges the Council to adopt its multi-year investment strategy to stabilize, modernize, and expand the aging services network. In addition, we offer Selfhelp’s program-specific priorities that align with and reinforce this citywide agenda.

#### **Budget Priorities**

Selfhelp urges the City Council to adopt a FY2027 budget that reflects the needs of New York City’s growing older adult population by:

- 1) **Adopting LiveOn NY’s AgeStrong NYC priorities**, including \$10M for OAC capital repairs, \$10M to complete the NORC network, \$90M for nutrition, and formalized NYC Aging–HPD collaboration; and
- 2) **Advancing Selfhelp’s programmatic and housing priorities**—robust funding for NYC Aging programs (including OACs, NORCs, and Social Adult Day Cares), expansion of the Holocaust Survivor Initiative, and increased investment in affordable senior housing, especially through SARA.

These investments will ensure older New Yorkers can remain connected to their communities—and their homes—with dignity, safety, and independence.

#### **The Urgent Need for Investment in Aging Services**

New York City’s aging services needs an increased investment to meet current needs and expected needs in the coming years.

- Economic insecurity is rising among older adults leaving them vulnerable to rising food, housing, and healthcare costs
- Older adult homelessness is escalating, with older New Yorkers becoming homeless at three times the rate of younger adults, driven largely by rent burdens and the shortage of affordable, accessible housing options.

The systems to support healthy aging—Older Adult Centers (OACs), Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), home-delivered and congregate meals, case management,



social adult day programs, and service-enriched affordable housing—already exist. Without sustained commitment, we risk marginalizing nearly one in five New Yorkers who are age 60+.

Preventing hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and premature nursing home placements through investments in nutrition supports, Older Adult Centers (OACs), Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), Social Adult Day Care, and service-enriched affordable housing is far less costly than institutional care. These community-based interventions help older adults manage chronic conditions, maintain functional independence, and remain socially connected—reducing avoidable use of high-cost healthcare and long-term care systems. Strategic investment in prevention and stability not only improves quality of life for older New Yorkers but also represents a fiscally responsible approach that generates long-term savings for the City.

## LiveOn NY's AgeStrong NYC Priorities

Selfhelp endorses LiveOn NY's call for a multi-year public investment plan—part of the **\$2.3 billion AgeStrong NYC campaign**—to ensure that older New Yorkers can age with safety, dignity, and stability.

### 1) Investment in OAC Infrastructure

Older Adult Centers have not received a significant, citywide capital investment in over two decades. Centers that serve as lifelines for nutrition, social connection, wellness, and case assistance are too often in disrepair.

- A capital infusion to bring OAC facilities to a state of good repair, coupled with continuation or expansion of the \$10 million revolving emergency repair fund to keep centers open and safe while capital projects advance.
- Selfhelp was the beneficiary of the FY26 funding to repair infrastructure needs at our Latimer Gardens OAC in Flushing Queens. This modest investment of about \$30,000 will make a big difference to the members of the center, allowing us to improve meals with better kitchen equipment and offer technology classes with new computers.

### 2) \$10 Million for a NORC in Every Neighborhood

The NORC model is proven and cost-effective, but coverage has not kept pace with demographic shifts.

- An investment to fill geographic gaps in the NORC network so all communities with significant older adult populations can access onsite social and health supports.
- We see how Selfhelp's four NORCs in Queens are a lifeline for the homeowners in the co-op buildings.

### 3) \$90 Million for Nutritional Support

Food costs have risen sharply, intensifying food insecurity for older adults.

- \$60 million to stabilize congregate meals at OACs, and \$30 million to provide fully funded weekend meals for home-delivered meals recipients.



#### 4) Deepen Collaboration Between NYC Aging and HPD

Older adults are four times more likely to become homeless than younger adults, yet successful service-enriched housing models remain under-recognized and inconsistently supported.

- Strengthen collaboration between NYC Aging and HPD to integrate aging services into affordable housing and find opportunities for senior-specific apartments in new construction affordable units.

### Selfhelp's FY2027 Budget Priorities

#### A. Fully Fund NYC Aging to Meet Needs

Increase funding for NYC Aging so community-based providers can avoid service reductions or waitlists and keep pace with rising costs. This includes continued investments in OACs and NORCs, which reduces isolation, promote health and wellness, and prevent premature institutionalization.

#### B. Preserve the Council's Holocaust Survivor Initiative

Selfhelp is North America's oldest and largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors. As survivors reach their late 80s, 90s, and 100s, their needs are intensifying for home care, case management, mental health support, transportation, and emergency financial assistance.

- Maintain the Holocaust Survivor Initiative in FY2027 to meet needs of the last generation of survivors, ensuring low income survivors can age with dignity.

#### C. Invest in Affordable, Service-Enriched Senior Housing—Especially SARA

Safe, affordable housing is foundational to healthy aging. Selfhelp's residences demonstrate that service-enriched affordable housing, including the Selfhelp Active Services for Aging Model (SHASAM), improve health outcomes and reduce avoidable emergency and institutional long term care.

- Increase capital for Senior Affordable Rental Apartments (SARA) and senior affordable apartments in new construction.
- Strengthen NYC Aging-HPD collaboration to scale effective models and prevent older adult homelessness.

#### D. Continue the Council's Social Adult Day Care Initiative

Nonprofit, community-based Social Adult Day Care programs serve older adults with cognitive impairment, dementia, and functional limitations—providing structured engagement, supervision, and caregiver respite. Consistent funding is essential to maintain capacity, retain trained staff, and meet program standards.

Thank you for your ongoing leadership supporting New York's older adults.



Re: FY'2027 Budget Hearing, Committee on Aging on March 12, 2026

Testimony by Heidi Henderson, Esq., MPA, Executive Director & CEO, SHARE Cancer Support and Maria Estrella, Vice President of Outreach, SHARE Cancer Support

Good afternoon,

Thank you, Council Member Zhuang and the members of the Committee on Aging for the opportunity to address you today regarding SHARE Cancer Support and the important impact this organization has for those at risk and in treatment for breast and gynecologic cancers in New York City.

#### ORGANIZATION MISSION AND DESCRIPTION

SHARE Self Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer, Inc. (SHARE Cancer Support) is a peer-led nonprofit organization established in 1976, which provides free linguistically appropriate and culturally sensitive programs for individuals diagnosed or at increased risk for breast or gynecologic cancers (e.g. cervical, ovarian, and uterine) and those living with metastatic breast cancer.

Our programs and services include information and education that has been developed in partnership with medical professionals and researchers, referrals, and navigation to care and support services, facilitation of support groups, outreach, multi-lingual peers and mentors, and a national Helpline staffed by peer volunteers and available in English, Spanish, and Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), as well as other languages, as needed, upon request. We have also recently translated our materials into Korean and Bangla.

Our mission is to help all individuals diagnosed with breast or gynecologic cancer effectively address the emotional and practical issues that arise from a cancer diagnosis and provide the support they need to feel less isolated, better informed, and more empowered as healthcare consumers. No one should go through cancer alone.

#### BACKGROUND/NEEDS STATEMENT

Breast cancer in this country is epidemic: 233,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women; 63,000 new cases of carcinoma in situ (CIS) will be diagnosed; 40,000 women will die this year from breast cancer, and 1 in 8 women will develop invasive breast cancer during her lifetime. According to the CDC, "Black women have the highest death rates of all racial and ethnic groups and are 40% more likely to die of breast cancer than white women." This difference results from many factors, including limited social and economic resources.

Latina women are about 20 percent more likely to die of breast cancer than non-Latina white women diagnosed at a similar age and stage, according to the American Cancer Society. Latinas are significantly more likely to present at a later stage with larger tumors that are



hormone-receptor negative, which are more challenging to treat. These disparities are exacerbated by barriers to treatment and lower rates of mammograms in the Latina community.

Gynecologic cancers – ovarian, cervical and uterine – are on the rise, particularly among women of color. Black women in particular, continue to experience late diagnosis and poor treatment outcomes due to a number of disparities in access to care, treatment, and support services.

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND IMPACT

Older adults, senior women and at-risk gender-expansive individuals, especially those from lower-income, historically overlooked communities, have been reported to receive less aggressive screening and treatment for cancer because of their age. As women get older, the focus on cancer awareness, screening, and diagnosis continues to wane. This is unfortunate since the risk and incidence of cancer continue to increase with age.

To address these disparities, SHARE Cancer Support has conducted extensive outreach and education to New York City older adults and seniors, as part of our Ambassador Outreach program. This program brings trained peers and SHARE Ambassadors together with older adults and seniors to provide life-saving information about breast, ovarian, uterine, and cervical cancer risk factors, symptoms, screening, and treatment options. Our Ambassadors are peers (often cancer survivors) recruited from the communities and populations being served. They are highly knowledgeable about local communities and populations, linguistically competent, and employ a culturally sensitive, trauma-informed approach to outreach, education, and support. Our Ambassador Program allows us to provide targeted, culturally and linguistically responsive education, support, and referral services to lower-income, Black, Latino, and Chinese-speaking older adults and seniors, particularly those who have been isolated and overlooked due to lack of access and linguistically appropriate services.

Our specially trained Ambassadors provide outreach presentations (in English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese) for older adults and seniors through our established partnerships with more than 50 older adult/senior centers, nursing homes, and other places where older adults and seniors gather in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island. We provide our educational sessions in-person as well as virtually, for those who continue to need protection against exposure to COVID, RSV, and other respiratory diseases. To do this, we have provided our staff and volunteers with special training to better utilize online technology, including training in creating short, informational videos about breast, ovarian, and uterine cancer that can be shared with seniors. We reach over 50,000 New York City residents each year through the Ambassador program.

The work of our Ambassadors is supported and enriched by connecting our clients with our entire range of support and education services, including our peer-led volunteer Helpline and is available in English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese, support groups, patient navigation services, and enhanced educational programs. Our virtual support groups and education programs have grown

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#### **SHARE Cancer Support**

315 West 39th Street, Suite 910, New York, NY 10018

sharecancersupport.org | 212.719.0364



rapidly in response to requests and demand, and our Ambassadors have followed suit by providing technical assistance to older adults and seniors who have encountered difficulty logging on and accessing online content. We have also tailored our programs to use the technology platforms that are most accessible to specific communities. For example, WhatsApp is a platform widely used by our Latina sisters and is the platform we use most to facilitate our LatinaSHARE support groups. High attendance and participation by monolingual Spanish speakers attests to the effectiveness of using this platform.

At SHARE, we have found that vulnerable older adults and seniors - particularly those also dealing with cancer - from lower-income and underserved communities were among the hardest hit during the pandemic, and the impact continues to be felt today. Through our telephone outreach and support groups, we have been able to help our older adult and senior clients deal with issues from food insecurity to housing assistance. This often requires hours-long support calls and extensive follow-up, and our staff and volunteers have expanded capacity to provide these much needed services.

Through our national programs, including support groups, online educational programs, educational materials, and our toll-free national Support Line, we reach over 350,000 patients, caregivers, and allies throughout the US with critical, potentially life-saving information on these cancers annually.

Our Ambassador services are available primarily as a result of the NYC discretionary funding received through the Cancer Health Initiative, Support for Older Adults, and individual discretionary awards from about a dozen City Council members. We are so grateful.

In addition to renewal funding for our Ambassador Programs, we seek additional funding to support our Patient Navigation Program. Patient Navigation is a proven, evidence-based best practice for addressing health disparities caused by race and other social determinants of health. Patient Navigators have been shown to effectively support patients with severe, high-risk, longer-term conditions, illnesses, or diseases. When Patient Navigators are recruited from historically excluded and unsupported communities, they can successfully engage and support members of those communities.

In 2025, through our Patient Navigation Program, we served over 300 breast and gynecologic patients, identified 1,932 concerns, provided 655 interventions, and provided over \$209,000 in financial assistance for the navigated patients. Our Patient Navigation Program is open to all patients who are diagnosed with breast or gynecologic cancer. We have a particular focus on serving low-income Latinas and Black women from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Our Patient Navigation team offers ongoing, intensive support to help connect patients with the resources they need. The majority of our patients are from low to middle-income families and are experiencing financial, physical, or psychological crises due to the impact of treatment, including financial toxicity.

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The challenges that our patients face during and after treatment are many and complex – often extending far beyond their healthcare needs. Below are brief case studies that demonstrate the level of need among our patients.

One of our patients was a 56-year-old woman who was diagnosed with Metastatic Breast Cancer. She was undergoing chemo and bone therapy. She experienced severe side effects that caused her to be hospitalized. The patient was experiencing extreme weight loss - she weighed less than 80 pounds when we met her and was barely eating because of the side effects of chemotherapy. The only thing that kept her from losing more weight was Ensure. However, faced with the high cost of Ensure and limited funds, she was forced to choose between buying groceries for her 14-year-old autistic son and 76-year-old mother or buying Ensure. She chose to feed her family rather than prioritize her own health. SHARE's Patient Navigation team was able to provide a broad range of support services for this patient, including securing funding for Ensure, and she now is on the road to recovery.

Our Navigation team experiences stories like this far too often. We know that our Patient Navigation Program is greatly needed and has the potential to be incredibly impactful in the lives of breast and gynecologic cancer patients – particularly those who are vulnerable, disconnected from care, and historically marginalized.

### FULL RANGE OF SERVICES

SHARE Cancer Support provides a broad range of programs and services all of them are free.

- Multilingual Helplines answered by knowledgeable, trained volunteers with their own cancer experiences
- On Demand Educational Webinars with up-to-the-minute information led by some of the world's leading medical professionals that are attended by over 185,000 people each year, providing previously inaccessible expertise for everyone who wants it.
- Support Groups for those who have been diagnosed, led by professionally trained survivors in English, Spanish and Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese).
- Novelas in English and Spanish that bring cancer signs, symptoms, treatment options and personal experiences to life, to help educate broader communities with culturally sensitive content.
- A robust Patient Navigation to provide one-on-one support for those in need of overcoming barriers to their healthcare and financial toxicity relating to their treatment.
- On-the-ground outreach to many of New York's most vulnerable populations with information about signs, symptoms, myth, facts, and free screenings from members of the community who have faced their own diagnoses.

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- Groundbreaking conferences that convene patients, healthcare providers, community organizational partners, pharmaceutical executives, and elected officials to determine and address key obstacles to equitable healthcare.
- Wide distribution of research projects that explore important topics such as older women's experiences with breast cancer diagnoses, and Black women's experiences with TNBC.

### PATIENT TESTIMONIAL

*"When I found out I had stage three breast cancer I wasn't sure what to do. I called SHARE's Support Line and they helped me find the resources I needed to understand my diagnosis. Then I started to attend one of their breast cancer Support Group meetings. The ladies shared a lot of personal information and best strategies with me. They taught me how to ask questions and empowered me to communicate with my medical team about my treatment.*

*SHARE has meant so much to me. First, they held my hand throughout my treatment and now, when new members join our group, I'm one of the ladies who helps them get perspective and build their confidence. I've become part of the support system that helped me!"*

*- Jocelyn Shao*

### FUNDING REQUEST

In order to continue SHARE's critical services, we are requesting funding from the City Council. Our funding requests this year include the following:

- \$248,969 through the Cancer Services Initiative
- \$20,000 through the Support Our Older Adults Initiative
- \$30,000 through the Food Pantry and Access Health Initiative
- \$10,000 through Member Items
- \$10,000 Older Adults Across Boroughs
- \$125,000 through the Speakers Initiative for the SHARE Cancer Support Ambassador Outreach Program



Thank you for your consideration and support. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. Should you have any questions, we can be reached at [hhenderson@sharecancersupport.org](mailto:hhenderson@sharecancersupport.org) or [mestrella@sharecancersupport.org](mailto:mestrella@sharecancersupport.org).



SERVICE PROGRAM FOR OLDER PEOPLE

**Testimony presented to the**

**New York City Council  
Committee on Aging**

Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 12, 2026

Catherine Thurston, LCSW

Chief Executive Officer

**Service Program for Older People, Inc.**

[www.spop.org](http://www.spop.org)

Good afternoon. I am Catherine Thurston, CEO of Service Program for Older People (SPOP). Thank you, Committee Chair Zhuang, and committee members for this opportunity to address the New York City Council Committee on Aging.

SPOP plays a unique role in supporting the health, emotional well-being, and independence of older New Yorkers . We are the only agency in the city that is exclusively dedicated to community-based mental health care for older adults, and we provide outpatient treatment to 1,000 adults each year. We have been doing this work for over 45 years, and we offer services via telehealth, at our offices on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and at satellite locations in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan.

We are only as strong as our network of community partners, and we work with NYC Aging and dozens of hospitals, older adult centers, and aging services providers to reach out to isolated adults who would otherwise have no access to mental healthcare.

Nearly one in four older adults in New York City experiences a mental health challenge, and about 6% live with a serious mental illness (SMI) such as schizophrenia or severe depression, which can affect their ability to function and live independently. For an older adult with SMI plus chronic medical illness, mobility impairment, and the cumulative impact of decades without appropriate care, life is very difficult.

While NYC Aging has worked to meet the needs of older adults in NYC with mental health needs through the DGMH initiative, one program is not enough to meet the complex needs of those who are most vulnerable.

We hear from colleagues across the sectors that the current structures do not work for older adults with serious mental illness. Most mental healthcare programs for SMI are designed for younger adults and are not equipped not to support clients who are also managing cognitive changes, fragile health, social isolation, and the practical realities of later life. Aging services, meanwhile, are often not equipped to provide robust psychiatric care. Older adults with SMI fall through the cracks—until they surface in the most visible and expensive systems we have: emergency rooms, hospitals, shelters, and, too often, the justice system.

This is not just a mental health issue. It is a public health issue, a public safety issue, and a fiscal responsibility issue.

I therefore urge the committee to advocate for robust funding for programs and services that support older adults, including community-based age-affirming mental healthcare for older adults with serious mental illness.

Thank you for your work on behalf of all older New Yorkers and for this opportunity to testify today.



**New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings  
Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027**

**New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Honorable Susan Zhuang, Chair**

**Submitted by: Abbie Rubin-Pope**

**March 12, 2026**

Thank you, Chair Zhuang, and members of the Committee on Aging for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Abbie Rubin-Pope, and I am the Policy and Advocacy Associate at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA's mission is to care for those in need -- identifying and meeting the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA supports an expansive network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services and allocates roughly \$200 million each year to support older adults, combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being, strengthen Jewish life, and respond to crises here and across the globe.

UJA submits the following recommendations for the FY26-27 budget:

**Maintain the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Nonprofit Human Services Providers**

UJA appreciates the City Council and Administration's commitment to providing cost-of-living adjustments for human services workers through FY26-27.

**A COLA remains a critical step toward addressing the historic underfunding and chronic disinvestment in the human services sector.** Across the sector, these workers perform some of the most essential jobs in our communities - caring for older adults, delivering meals, assisting families, providing childcare services, supporting individuals facing mental health challenges, and responding in times of crisis - yet they continue to be underpaid and undervalued. Government is the predominant funder of human services through city contracts. Sustained investment in this workforce is necessary to stabilize programs and ensure continuity of care.

Without continued support, low wages contribute to high staff turnover and unsustainable caseloads for those who remain- all of which ultimately weaken the safety net for older New Yorkers.

**UJA urges the City Council and Administration to maintain and build upon their commitment to strengthening the human services workforce.**

### **Invest in Older Adult Centers and Critical Infrastructure**

Older Adult Centers (OACs) are foundational to the city's aging services network. They provide congregate meals, socialization, case management, benefits access, wellness programming, and serve as hubs of community for hundreds of thousands of older adults annually.

However, aging services providers face mounting infrastructure challenges. Across the system, centers are operating in deteriorating facilities with broken appliances, HVAC systems, elevators, kitchens, vans, and unsafe conditions that threaten accessibility and continuity of services. Many centers located in NYCHA facilities face severe structural and environmental issues, including mold and building code violations, that put programs and participants at risk.

The city has estimated that repairing community centers located in NYCHA developments alone could cost nearly \$1 billion. Yet providers often lack clear pathways to access capital funding, particularly when operating in city-owned buildings but facing restrictive qualification rules.

To address these urgent needs, **UJA urges the Council and Administration to:**

- **Fully fund a \$60 million increase for congregate meal providers** to address seven years of flat food funding and rising operating costs.
- **Maintain the \$5 million emergency infrastructure fund** to allow centers to address urgent safety and accessibility repairs.
- **Reform capital qualification rules** so that centers operating in city-owned buildings, including NYCHA facilities, can access capital funding.
- **Create coordinated interagency mechanisms** to resolve building code violations in NYCHA-based centers to prevent unnecessary penalties and service disruptions.
- **Explore longer contract renewal windows** to ensure program stability and capital eligibility for providers operating in private developments.

Older adult centers are not optional amenities; they are essential infrastructure for healthy aging. The City must ensure they are safe, accessible, and adequately funded.

### **Invest in Nutrition Services**

Food insecurity remains a persistent and growing challenge among older New Yorkers. Congregate and home-delivered meal programs are lifelines that address hunger, reduce isolation, and prevent costly health interventions.

Providers have faced years of flat funding for food despite significant increases in costs. **Without meaningful investment, programs are at risk of reducing services or compromising quality.**

The FY26-27 budget must include:

- **\$60 million in increased funding for congregate meals** to stabilize the system.
- **Continued support for daily home-delivered meals** and expanded access for homebound older adults.



Nutrition services are preventive health care. They reduce hospitalizations, support medication adherence, and allow older adults to remain safely in their homes and communities.

### **Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (N/NORCs)**

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and Neighborhood NORCs (NNORCs) are proven, community-based models that allow older adults to age safely and independently in their homes.

These integrated care models provide case management, nursing services, health and wellness programming, socialization, volunteer engagement, and culturally competent outreach. They reduce isolation, delay institutionalization, and strengthen entire communities.

However, **rising nursing and health care costs continue to strain the N/NORC model.** Nursing services - a required component of the program - are not fully covered under city contracts, and rates have risen significantly in recent years.

To sustain and strengthen N/NORC programs, **the FY26-27 budget must include increased support to address rising nursing costs** and ensure programs can continue providing critical health and social services to thousands of older adults across New York City.

Without Council investment, many N/NORC programs would not be able to maintain required service levels.

### **Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors Initiative**

The Council-funded Holocaust Survivors Initiative continues to be a lifeline for survivors grappling with poverty, food insecurity, isolation, complex medical needs, and trauma.

More than 50 percent of New York's remaining Holocaust survivors live in or near poverty. Many emigrated to the United States later in life with limited savings and receive little to no Social Security income.

Today, the youngest survivors are over 80 years old. While the number of survivors declines each year, the cost of care increases due to the complexity of their physical and mental health needs. Survivors experience disproportionately high rates of chronic illness, trauma-related mental health conditions, and long-term medical complications stemming from persecution, displacement, and malnutrition.

The past several years have further exacerbated survivors' vulnerability as they have faced the pandemic, rising antisemitism, global conflict, and escalating cost of living.

Last year, the City Council allocated \$4.2 million for the Holocaust Survivors Initiative. **UJA respectfully requests that the FY26-27 budget maintain funding at \$4.2 million.**

This investment supports:

- Specialized case management
- Trauma-informed mental health services
- Crisis prevention and emergency assistance

- Legal and entitlement counseling
- Socialization programming
- Caregiver training and support
- End-of-life services

Many providers continue to maintain significant waitlists. Sustaining funding is essential to ensuring survivors can live their remaining years with dignity.

There is limited time left to honor our collective promise to “never abandon, never forget.”

### **Conclusion**

New York City’s older adult population continues to grow, and with it the responsibility to ensure a stable, well-funded, and equitable aging services system.

We urge the City Council and Administration to:

- Maintain investments in the human services workforce
- Fully fund nutrition services
- Address capital and infrastructure needs at older adult centers
- Sustain and strengthen N/NORCs
- Maintain funding for the Holocaust Survivors Initiative

Older New Yorkers deserve to age with dignity, stability, and connection. UJA stands ready to partner with the Council to achieve that goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please contact [Rubin-PopeA@UJAFedNY.org](mailto:Rubin-PopeA@UJAFedNY.org) with any questions.



**UNITED  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
HOUSES**

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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council**

**FY 2027 Preliminary Budget Hearing: Committee on Aging  
Council Member Susan Zhuang, Chair**

**Submitted by Anita Kwok, Policy Analyst  
March 12, 2026**

Thank you for convening today's Preliminary Budget hearing. United Neighborhood Houses of New York (UNH) is a policy and social change organization with a mission to promote and strengthen settlement houses' neighborhood-based, multi-service approach to improving the lives of low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. Settlement houses provide multi-generational services designed to support individuals, families, and communities. Settlement house programs build bonds within and between communities and create opportunities for advocacy and social change. UNH was founded in 1919 by settlement house leaders who recognized the strength in their collective voices to drive important social reforms. With this goal, UNH was tasked to coordinate the efforts of settlement houses; document their shared learning and experiences; and increase the influence and impact of settlement houses for the greater good of New York communities. UNH has successfully advocated for fair and affordable housing, child labor laws, inclusive policies and services for immigrants, adult literacy education, public recreation space, quality child-care and after-school programs, job training, programs serving older adults, access to the arts and to healthy food, and more.

UNH members provide a wide variety of services to over 130,000 older New Yorkers each year by operating programs such as older adult centers (OACs), Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), home delivered meal (HDM) programs, Geriatric Mental Health, case management programs, and others, often funded and contracted by NYC Aging and the City Council. UNH and its settlement house members employ the philosophy that older adults are valued members of our neighborhoods, whose wisdom and experience are important to the fabric of our communities.

UNH looks forward to working with the new Commissioner at the Department for the Aging and our new Aging Chair in the Council to strengthen our City's aging services network. With a rapidly growing older adult population and rising service unmet needs due to inflation and assault on social safety nets, this moment presents an important opportunity to reassess and reinvest in the programs that older New Yorkers rely on. The aging services network has a number of urgently-needed new investments to meet the needs of a growing older adult population and to rectify years of systemic underinvestment.

We welcome the Council’s advocacy in the FY 2026 Budget in alleviating these concerns.

### Overview

In FY 2027, UNH urges the City to take the following budget actions to support older New Yorkers:

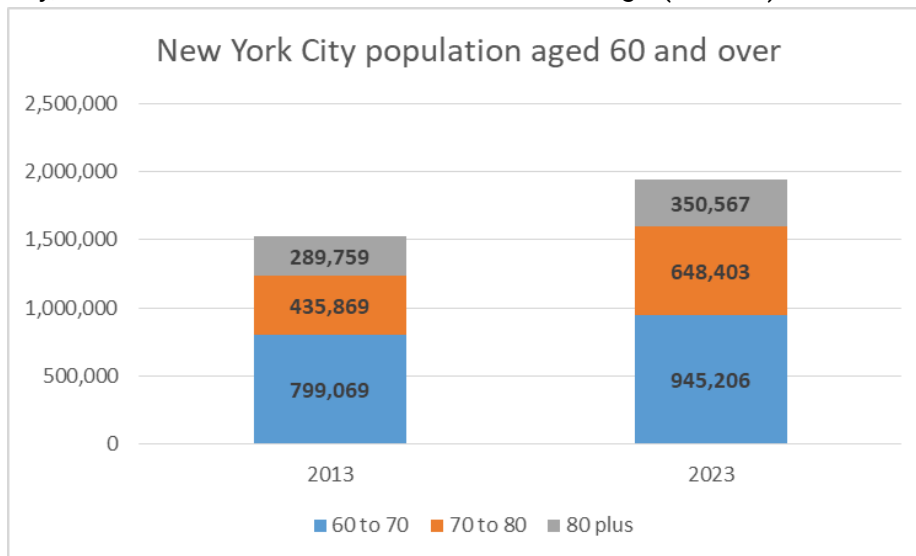
- Invest \$10 million to expand the number of Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) to ensure there is a “NORC in Every Neighborhood”;
- Baseline long-standing NORC nursing support that is part of the City Council’s NORC Initiative of approximately \$1 million.
- Increase congregate meal budgets at older adult centers by \$60 million to cover inflation;
- Invest \$30 million to expand home-delivered meals to 7 days a week, in line with Intro 280; and
- Expand the Council’s emergency capital infrastructure fund to \$10 million for older adult centers

### Growing Older Adult Population

Data from the Census Bureau’s 2023 American Community Survey show that the older adult population in NYC continues to grow, there are more older adults living in poverty, and the City’s older adult population has become more racially diverse. This data provides strong evidence about the need for additional investments in City aging services in FY27.

#### ***Steadily growing older adult population in NYC:***

- As of 2023, there are now 1.9 million older adults aged 60 and over living in New York City, a 28% increase from 1.5 million a decade ago (in 2013).



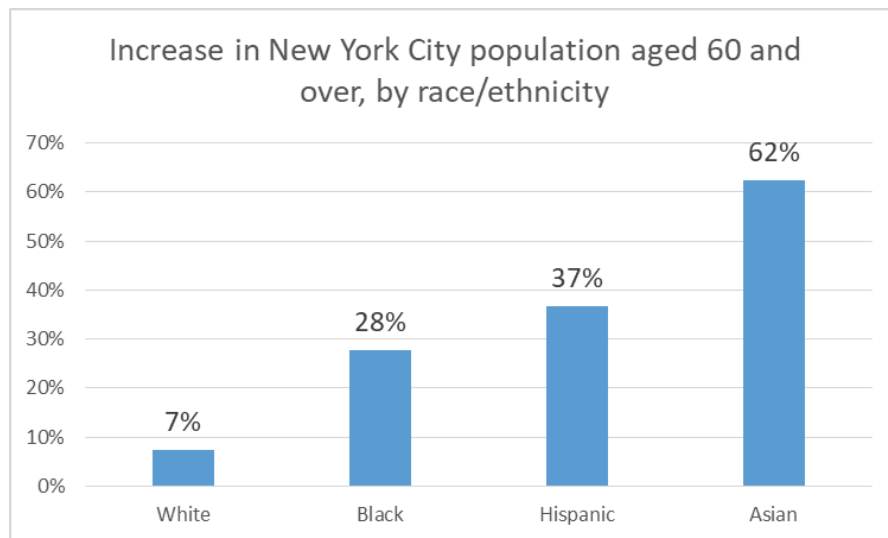
- The growth in 70- to 80-year-old New Yorkers has driven much of this increase—this age cohort surged by nearly half (49 percent) between 2013 and 2023, from about 436,000 in 2013 to 648,000 by 2023.
- This growth in the older adult population occurred even as the population of children in NYC fell by 8 percent over the past decade.
- As of 2023, older adults now make up 24 percent of all New York City residents, up from 18 percent a decade ago (2013).

**Increase over past decade in the number of older adults living poverty:**

- Citywide, nearly one in five older adults aged 60 and over live in poverty (19 percent).
- Asian and Latinx older adults are twice as likely as White older adults to live in poverty (23 percent of Asian older adults and 30 percent of Latinx older adults live in poverty, compared to just 12 percent of White older adults).
- The number of the City’s older adults living in poverty has increased by 37 percent over the past decade, from 269,000 in 2013 to 367,000 in 2023.
- Increase has been notable among the City’s Asian older adult population – the number of Asian older adults living in poverty has increased by 66 percent since 2013.
- Older adult poverty rates are highest in the Bronx and Brooklyn (as of 2023)
  - More than 1 out of every 4 older adults in the Bronx live in poverty (27 percent)
  - More than 1 out of every 5 older adults in Brooklyn live in poverty (21 percent)

**NYC’s older adult population has become more racially diverse over the past decade:**

- In 2013, White New Yorkers made up 43 percent of the City’s older adult population; by 2023, this share had declined to 36 percent.
- Latinx share of the City’s older adult population edged up from 21 percent in 2013 to 23 percent in 2023.
- Asian share of the City’s older adult population increased from 12 percent of older New Yorkers in 2013 to 15 percent by 2023; overall, the Asian older adult population in NYC has increased by a staggering 62 percent between 2013 and 2023, while the White older adult population rose by just 7 percent over the same time period.



- Over the past decade, the number of foreign-born New Yorkers increased by 39 percent, from about 740,000 in 2013 to nearly 1 million by 2023. Immigrant New Yorkers now comprise 53 percent of NYC's older adult population, up from 49 percent a decade ago.

### **Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities**

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) are cost-effective integrated care models bringing together social services and health care to meet the needs of older adults in their homes and communities, promoting aging in place with dignity. NORCs were founded with the ultimate goal of transforming residential complexes and neighborhoods to meet the needs of a growing cohort of older residents and enable them to remain living independently in their homes, thrive in their communities, and delay hospitalization or nursing home placement. NORC programs provide case management services; health and nursing services; recreational, social and cultural activities; volunteer opportunities, and ancillary services tailored to meet the needs of each community. Programs actively encourage healthy aging by providing access to health care, promoting health and wellness activities, addressing disease prevention, and responding to chronic health conditions.

### ***NORC in Every Neighborhood***

UNH's 2024 report, [\*NORCs: An Antidote to Social Isolation\*](#), analyzed the surge in the older adult population in New York State, their needs, and the challenges they face, and recommended expanding the program statewide. Key findings from the report included:

- There are now *4.7 million older adult New Yorkers, up 26 percent from 3.7 million a decade ago (in 2012)*. Older adults aged 60 and over make up a *quarter of all New Yorkers*, compared to 20 percent a decade ago.
- Over *half (51 percent) of poor older adult New York State residents live alone*, more than triple the share of higher-income older adult New Yorkers.
- As of 2022, an estimated *586,000 older New Yorkers—more than one in every 10—live in poverty*, up from about 409,000 a decade ago.
- Compared to costs of nearly \$160,000 for one older adult in a private room in a nursing home, NORC programs are incredibly cost-efficient: In New York City, the average NORC program costs *\$251,000 and serves 355 older adults a year*.
- Older adults participating in a NORC program are often likely to develop a trusted relationship with a NORC program nurse, which can help coordinate overall healthcare needs. The NORC program model brings healthcare to older adults so that they don't have to leave their community to seek care, which is especially critical for older adults who have chronic conditions that require constant monitoring, such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

**The time is now to invest in this essential program for New York City's aging population.** UNH recently published a follow-up brief to our 2024 report, titled [\*A NORC in Every Neighborhood: Expanding Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities to Meet the Needs of Older New Yorkers\*](#), which analyzes the need to expand NORC programs across New York City as the City's older adult population continues to grow. Our brief examines the benefits of NORC programs and highlights neighborhoods with a high concentration of older adults without NORC programs. For example, the Queens Village, Bellerose, and Rosedale neighborhoods in Queens have a

combined population of 58,238 residents aged 60 and older, about 28 percent of all residents, but currently have no NORC program. In every neighborhood of New York City, from Bushwick to Flushing, there are thousands of older adult residents who would benefit from a contracted NORC program in every neighborhood.

The expansion of NORCs will ensure older adults have their needs met in the comfort of their own neighborhoods and communities for as long as possible. The growth in the older adult population, especially in the share of those living alone, should compel the City to invest in and expand services that not only help reduce the risk of social isolation, but also enable older adults to remain safely in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

**UNH recommends that New York City include a new investment of \$10 million in the FY27 budget to ensure that there is a NORC in every neighborhood.** There should be a contracted procurement process through NYC Aging that prioritizes siting a NORC program in each of the 31 neighborhoods that currently lacks one. This procurement could happen concurrently with a planned NORC Request for Proposals (RFP) for the entire system, or be a standalone RFP for new programs only. Each program would cost approximately \$322,000, more than the current contract average of \$251,000, to account for higher staff salaries and program costs. A \$10 million investment to ensure that there is a contracted NORC program in every neighborhood in New York City would benefit thousands of older adult residents and contribute to a more age-friendly, affordable and inclusive city.<sup>1</sup>

### ***NORC Initiative***

The City Council NORC initiative provides essential supplemental funding for programs, and also independently funds several NORCs that do not have separate City contracts. For the last several years, this funding has included support for nursing services in NYC Aging-contracted NORCs. This funding fills a gap left by the reduction of pro-bono nursing services that are required by NORC contracts. The nursing funding is essential and providers rely on this support. Since the Council began providing these funds in 2019, the standard hourly rate to hire nurses has increased from \$85 to approximately \$100 per hour. This rising cost must be reflected in future allocations to ensure programs can continue delivering essential care.

Council initiative funding also goes to some State-contracted Neighborhood NORCs, and serves as a required matching fund grant for these contracts that providers rely on. Because of the Council's enthusiasm for the NORC program, we have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing older adult population. **In FY 2027, the City must baseline long-standing NORC nursing support that is part of the City Council's NORC Initiative of approximately \$1 million, and continue to fund the Council's NORC Initiative funding.**

### **Congregate Meals**

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the FY26-27 proposed State budget includes a doubling of current NORC funding, from \$8 million to \$16 million total. If this funding goes through, we expect there will be a statewide procurement and additional NORCs will be created, some which could be located in New York City. If that happens, our \$10 million budget request can be adjusted. However, it is too soon to know how much funding will be available, it is unlikely that any will be set aside for NYC through the procurement process, and we believe the State is prioritizing non-NYC NORC development. Currently, 32 of the 43 State-contracted NORCs are located in NYC. NYC Aging contracts with 36 City-funded NORCs. 22 NORCs braid together State and City contracts.



Older adult centers (OACs) are crucial supports for older New Yorkers, offering both in-person and virtual activities, congregate meals, and other essential supports. Settlement houses in UNH's network operate 42 standalone OACs and two network OACs, serving tens of thousands of older adults in these centers.

Rising inflation rates have affected senior meals programs, especially food costs for congregate meals. There has not been an increase to the congregate meals budget in years, since at least the last RFP in 2021 which predated a period of abnormally high inflation. Food costs have reached record highs, placing an immense strain on an already chronically underfunded meal program. Rising food costs have made it increasingly difficult for providers to provide culturally-competent and nutritious meals.

UNH documented the dramatic increase in meal costs in our 2025 report, [\*Let's Eat: The Need to Invest in Congregate Meals for Older New Yorkers\*](#), which highlighted Census data on the growing financial hardship of older New Yorkers and the impact of inflation on their mental and economic well-being. The report features findings from a focus group of 15 UNH settlement house members that highlights the challenges they face in serving meals at their older adult centers. For example, inflation has gone up by 22% for food since older adult center contracts began in 2021, though some providers reported wholesale food price increases that have gone up as much as 76%. The costs faced by providers have significantly outpaced general inflation rates. Still, the City has not provided any new funding for food in that time period. Older adult centers are doing the best they can with extremely limited funds to ensure seniors receive the meals they need.

At the same time, federal cuts to SNAP and new ABAWD regulations will drive more older New Yorkers to older adult centers to utilize their meal programming. This will place an even greater strain on meal programs at Older Adult Centers across the City, most of which are already stretched thin and lack the resources to accommodate the growing number of participants. The time is now to plan for expanded units at OACs and ensure additional funding to support expected growth in food needs, including ensuring that culturally competent, nutritious meals remain consistently available.

The City must ensure inflation costs are included annually in future budgets for congregate meals at OACs. The City must **increase food budgets at older adult centers with a \$60 million investment in FY27 to meet inflation demands for congregate meal services**. This \$60 million figure is consistent with an analysis of the on-the-ground needs from UNH and our advocacy partners, taking into account inflation rates and the true cost of food for OACs, which has risen much faster than inflation rates. **We also urge contract flexibility and additional funding to meet the expected growing demand for congregate meals in light of federal SNAP cuts and ABAWD requirements for SNAP**. Food insecurity remains high among older adults, and anything the City can do to address these needs should be embraced.

### **Home Delivered Meals and Intro 280**

Nonprofit home delivered meals (HDM) providers deliver a daily nutritious meal to homebound older adults who are unable to prepare their own food, while also providing case management and regular in-person wellness checks for those at risk of social isolation. Eight UNH members currently provide home delivered meals in their communities, either as lead contractors or

subcontractors. We deeply appreciate the Council's support over the last few years in securing funding for a higher reimbursement rate for the HDM program. Since 2021, the per-meal reimbursement rate has increased from \$9.58 to \$14.78 per meal. This is a significant and essential improvement.

Older adult hunger is at a crisis level. For many homebound older adults, the HDM program is the only food they are receiving for all of their nutritional needs, and they will stretch the meal to last all day. We need to look toward expanding this system and providing more meals to those who need them. We call for a **\$30 million investment to operationalize Council Member Lee's Intro 280, which requires the City to pay for meals 7 days a week.** Currently, weekend and holiday home-delivered meals are provided through a public-private partnership with Citymeals on Wheels. Intro 280 shifts the responsibility from Citymeals on Wheels to regular NYC Aging home delivered meal contracts, allowing Citymeals to provide additional meals per day. Expanding home delivered meals is critical to addressing food insecurity among older adults and ensuring homebound seniors receive nutritious meals.

### **Capital Improvements for Older Adult Centers**

NYC Aging-funded programs often face major difficulties with aging buildings and equipment upkeep. Systemwide needs include infrastructure upgrades, HVAC repairs, accessibility upgrades, technology systems, kitchen equipment, bathroom repairs, and more. Providers frequently express problems with leaks and flooding after storms, and note that these are becoming more frequent as climate change accelerates the rate and intensity of weather-related disasters.

Capital funds play an important role in high-quality service provision by keeping buildings and equipment in a state of good repair. Unfortunately, aging services programs have a number of long-standing capital needs that continue to grow. These issues vary by provider and include building repairs, renovations, kitchen equipment, HVAC units, vehicle repairs and replacements, and more. Without sufficient capital funding streams available, these repair needs are exacerbated, and can result in interrupting service delivery when buildings or equipment become unsafe. For example, HVAC units may break down, meaning a cooling center may not be able to open and keep older adults safe in a heat wave. Tumultuous weather may cause a roof to leak, leaving spaces inoperable until repairs can be made.

Funding for many of these needs has been challenging to be approved by the City, and providers report that NYC Aging in particular is slow to get projects and funds approved, with numerous bureaucratic hurdles such as being passed around between numerous City agencies.

Aging programs located in NYCHA spaces have their own unique set of challenges. Despite a law passed by the City Council in 2019 requiring that NYC Aging have a NYCHA liaison on staff, providers report numerous hurdles in getting any projects approved. NYC Aging programs at NYCHA must submit tickets, but tickets are often closed without resolution. Sometimes, projects have been paused for years due to lack of funding, leaving centers operating without critical systems. This poor bureaucratic process results in prolonged repair timelines and uncertainty for providers trying to serve older adults safely. Site control issues have also been a barrier toward funding, and we urge the City to fund needed NYCHA community center repairs regardless of who holds the lease. Some of our settlement house members have been asked to take on capital utility investments or sign leases without corresponding City funding to cover

rent and infrastructure costs. Providers cannot be expected to assume significant capital responsibilities when they do not control the NYCHA site and are not funded to cover those costs.

We also recognize that tenant apartments in NYCHA developments can be in dire stages of disrepair, and repairs and renovations to community centers should not come at the expense of renovating tenants' homes. This is why creative solutions are needed from other government agencies so that NYCHA can focus on tenant apartment repairs.

In many cases, nonprofits pursue capital funding from City Council discretionary and state and federal member item funding, because these funds can be easier to access. However, these funds are never stable or consistent, and not every organization is able to access them. Organizations cannot continue to contract with the City to run services if the City cannot commit to paying for the resources needed to execute the contract. Only a fully-funded capital services funding stream can meet the various needs and keep the aging services network operating successfully.

We were incredibly grateful that in the FY26 Budget, the Council allocated \$5 million in expense funding to fund repairs to older adult center infrastructure across the city. Several UNH members receive this funding and report positive results with their ongoing repair work. One of our members just began upgrading their OAC office and computer room. We hope that the Council will expand the emergency infrastructure fund from \$5 million to \$10 million to keep centers accessible by ensuring critical infrastructure issues are dealt with. Our older adults deserve dignified spaces to provide them with healthy meals, fun activities, classes, fitness programs and social services.

### **Age Strong NYC**

United Neighborhood Houses is part of the Age Strong NYC Coalition with other aging advocates and partners and supports the full list of priorities.

- Affordable Housing
  - \$250 million for the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE), which will continue to freeze the rent for eligible New Yorkers 62+ and is a foundational policy which allows all of us to age in place.
  - 1000 SARA units per year with priority given to 1 bedroom units without sacrificing unit count to address the older adult homelessness crisis and grow the pipeline which gets older adults off the streets and into housing.
  - \$200 million to rebuild HUD 202 residences across NYC to meet safety and cleanliness standards.
- Affordable Community
  - \$10 million to continue the Council's funding for infrastructure and repairs for Older Adult Centers across NYC.
  - \$1 billion in funding to ensure that older adult centers housed in NYCHA projects meet safety and cleanliness standards, to combat social isolation and connect older New Yorkers with their communities.
  - \$10 million for a Naturally-Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) in every neighborhood in NYC, ensuring that older adults in all five boroughs are connected with the programs and services they need.
- Affordable Wellness

- \$30 million to cover the HDM Weekend Meals program and ensure that meals meet nutrition standards.
- \$60 million for a Congregate Meals rate increase, which hasn't seen an increase in funding since 2021. In fact, this funding would only be an inflation adjustment, not even accounting for other challenges including SNAP uncertainty, the affordability crisis' impact on costs, and culturally-competent meals.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [akwok@unhny.org](mailto:akwok@unhny.org).

Testimony of VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget Budget Hearings  
Department for the Aging  
Thursday, March 12th

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Elizabeth Lee, Senior Director at VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, a nonprofit organization that has served New Yorkers with vision loss for nearly **100 years**.

Last year alone, VISIONS supported **over 8,000 New Yorkers**, including **more than 2,000 older adults age 60 and older**. Our mission is simple but powerful: to help people who are blind or visually impaired live independently and remain active in their communities.

Vision loss is a disability multiplier. When blindness or low vision intersects with aging, poverty, or other disabilities, inequities compound — and current systems are not built to respond holistically. Older adults with vision loss face significantly higher risks of:

- Social isolation
- Depression and cognitive decline
- Falls and hospitalization
- Loss of independence
- Many older adult centers and community programs are not designed to accommodate the needs of participants who are blind or visually impaired.

In New York City alone, an estimated 84,000 older adults over the age of 65 are living with blindness, and many more experience significant vision impairment.

VISIONS works closely with the Department for the Aging (DFTA) and a citywide network of partners to ensure older adults with vision loss receive the support they need to remain independent. Because specialized services for older adults who are blind or visually impaired are limited, our **Older Adult Center and Caregiver Support Program serve participants from across all five boroughs**. Through these citywide programs, along with vision rehabilitation services, and community outreach, VISIONS provides accessible health and wellness programming, assistive technology training, support groups, nutritious meals, and both community-based and in-home services. These programs help older New Yorkers remain safe, socially connected, and able to age in place. We are grateful for the City's continued investment in these services.

However, significant gaps remain. When you combine age, vision loss, and limited income, isolation and health risks increase dramatically. The four leading causes of

blindness, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration, and cataracts are progressive conditions that increase as people age, meaning vision loss affects a growing number of older New Yorkers. With early identification and access to vision rehabilitation services, many older adults can maintain independence and safely age in place. Additionally, vision loss is one of the strongest predictors of social isolation among older adults and yet it is still rarely addressed directly in aging policy.

As the City and Council considers the FY27 budget, we respectfully urge investment in the following priorities:

**First**, dedicated funding for vision rehabilitation services within aging programs, including accessible training that allows older adults to safely navigate their homes and communities.

**Second**, improved accessible transportation options. Many older adults with vision loss cannot safely travel independently to receive services. Partnerships with rideshare providers or ambulette services could dramatically improve access.

**Third**, the integration of vision screening and rehabilitation referrals within older adult centers, NORCs, and case management systems, ensuring vision loss is identified and addressed earlier.

**Fourth**, continued investment in technology access and training. Adaptive technology allows older adults with vision loss to connect with family, access healthcare, and participate in virtual programs.

Finally, we encourage support for **intergenerational programming**, which brings young people together with older adults to provide technology assistance, mentorship, and social connection. These programs reduce isolation and strengthen communities across generations.

VISIONS stands ready to work with the Council and the Department for the Aging to ensure that older New Yorkers with vision loss are not left behind.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to supporting older adults across our city.

**Visiting Neighbors' Testimony**  
**New York City Council's Committee on Aging**  
**Hearing March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

My name is Dr. Cynthia Maurer, and I am the Executive Director of **Visiting Neighbors**. Thank you for the opportunity to submit Testimony. We are grateful to the *NYC Council* and *The Aging Committee* for your support of our vital programs through **The Older Adults Clubs, Programs and Enhancements Initiatives** and **Support Our Older Adults**, as well as our local legislators for their discretionary funding in our current fiscal year and we need you to continue that support in 2027, as we have not stopped working and have continued to support our older and frailer neighbors. We continue to be in the vanguard of organizations helping seniors "age in place."

**Our mission:**

This Spring marks Visiting Neighbors' 54th year of providing life-enhancing and essential support services enabling individuals age 60+ to remain independent and safe in their own homes and a vital part of the New York City Community. Through programs of "neighbors helping older neighbors," volunteers, supported by Visiting Neighbors' professional staff, help older adults alleviate loneliness and isolation, provide mental stimulation and emotional security, share information about wellness and health related concerns, have important conversations on many important and difficult topics, and encourage physical independence and quality of life at home. Visiting Neighbors champions the power of the volunteer and encourages interdependence so that mutual learning and understanding brings generations together to share life experiences and gain respect for each individual's uniqueness.

The organization promotes a positive acceptance of life after sixty and the value of the elderly in society. Visiting Neighbors' main programs; are **Health Management/ Health Advocacy/Health, and Wellness (Physical, Mental and Emotional) Programs, Friendly Visiting, Shop & Escort, Therapeutic Walking, Telephone Reassurance, Intergenerational Friendship and Learning, Case Assistance, Caregiver Support, Remembering Special Occasions, and Information & Referral.**

**There is no income eligibility requirement, nor a fee for services.**

**Our clients:**

- Visiting Neighbors' clients are 60 – Centenarian plus (Currently our oldest client is 107).
- 75% of our clients are over 80 and 33% are over 90.
- Thirty-three clients are over 100.
- Our clients tend to be frail, with one or more recurring ailments.
- 77% are female and 22% are male and 1% define themselves as non-binary or other.
- 96% live alone.
- We now have second and third generation legacy clients.
- We serve a diverse group of individuals who want to age-in-place, most of whom live on fixed incomes and can't afford to pay for help (98% of our clients can neither pay for private services, nor are eligible for Medicaid).
- They are determined to remain independent and want to remain in their own cherished homes. And for those few who need to move we help them with that transition.
- Visiting Neighbors' seniors feel more confident knowing we are here to listen, offer support and guidance. We earn their trust. They understand that we do not judge them and know they will be treated with respect, empathy and kindness.



- Our clients tend to be very verbal and share with us with a raw honesty what they feel, think, want, need and wish. We have every conceivable type of discussion with our clients, including the very hard ones i.e. end of life concerns or coping with the significant effects of changes they may be experiencing (physically, emotionally and/or mentally).
- *Once becoming a client, they are usually with us for the remainder of their lives, and we do what we can to enhance the quality of those lives.*

**Because of our NYC Council's support Visiting Neighbors has had the following Outcomes:**

1. Many older adults, when they first engage with us, express they feel overlooked, forgotten and/or have low self-esteem. They learn with Visiting Neighbors' Friendly Visitors they do not have to be alone and will have someone they can turn to and will be a lot less lonely. Seniors have someone safe, supportive, and empathetic to talk with/vent their frustrations too. We also give older adults an opportunity to be heard, seen and feel understood. Our volunteers (ages 14-93) are gaining understanding and empathy towards their new older friend(s) and the older adults' self-esteem is enhanced from having an active interested listener. We have been encouraging seniors receiving Friendly Visitors to share more about their life with their volunteer visitors. We have been giving them a chance to "tell their stories." We are a multi-generational program and connect different generations together, so older adults have a trained, reliable, and compassionate volunteer to enjoy meaningful conversation with to combat their sadness, loneliness, anxiety, isolation, sadness and despair.
2. Older adults became better informed on a variety of wellness issues, and we got them asking more questions. Older adults had better communication with their health professionals. We also encourage them not to be intimidated and speak up about concerns and encourage them to seek/get additional opinions, so they have as much clarity as possible.
3. Older adults have been getting to and from their health care appointments, procedures, vaccinations, and treatments including regular medical check-ups, dialysis, physical therapy, colonoscopy, endoscopy, cataract and other surgeries, rehab, chemo, etc., with the assistance of a trained volunteer escort by their side who will serve as an advocate when necessary, so they are not ignored. When an older adult comes home from a hospital stay, we check in on them to make sure they have what they need. Quite a few of our clients have some visual and/or hearing impairment, are unsteady on their feet, use a mobility aid(s) and may be nervous needing additional emotional support such as when they receive an upsetting diagnosis.
4. We provide additional connections and emotional support through Telephone Reassurance calls to seniors who want to get regular check-in calls between friendly visits or just to know someone is making sure they are ok.
5. We also use an in-home wellness visit as an opportunity to update seniors' current emergency contact and primary care physician and keep lists of key info (i.e., medication list, amounts, dosage, and time) readily handy.
6. We provide safety-in-home checks of senior's dwellings to help older adults avoid senseless accidents.
7. Older adults have been getting their errands done such as escorts to/from banks, Access-a-ride & SCRIE offices for sign up & renewals, helping read mail, shopping for groceries, clothing, appliances and household items, hair salons, rehabs, library, cemetery visits, social programs, getting pets to vets and go vote. We promote older adults using absentee ballots when they can't get out and help get those ballots in the mail. Volunteers will go shopping or do an errand

either with or for a senior depending on the seniors' needs, desires, circumstances or based on weather.

8. We share vital information about good nutrition, super foods, the importance of adhering to their prescribed diet(s) i.e., diabetes, monitoring salt intake, staying hydrated and access to healthy food and essential supplies. We also share information on community activities that would benefit them, i.e. health fairs, shredding events, free screenings, local food programs, and giveaways etc.
9. We provide caregivers, seniors and caring neighbors/friends with information and referrals, many of whom were overwhelmed, exhausted and/or stressed & needed some guidance, especially with help navigating the hospital/medical system and helpful hints/strategies to work with willful seniors and/or an opportunity to vent and discuss their fears and frustrations.
10. Older adults have been taking more (and longer) healthy walks safely outside accompanied by a trained volunteer or two. Quite a few seniors have become power walkers because of the more frequent walking. We get seniors moving more (and volunteers too are taking more steps).
11. Older adults are remembered on special occasions like birthdays & holidays, so they feel included, connected to others and loved.
12. Older adults have described feeling emotionally, mentally, and physically supported by Visiting Neighbors and reported feeling empowered, so that they have been able to retain or re-establish their sense of self-worth.
13. Our Intergenerational activities/projects foster respectful, enjoyable, informative and meaningful conversations and friendly relations are established between two generations. Our young students (ages 14-24) gain respect for the life experiences of the seniors—everything from having common sense to basic knowledge of life and seniors learn that they are still relevant. We found that by participating, seniors have been describing feeling good about themselves and feeling empowered, as they learn they are valued and can be appreciated for sharing their wisdom with a younger generation—that they still having something to offer and share with others and both populations come to realize they may have much more in common than they originally thought and enjoy learning from each other. Both seniors and some younger students often had preconceived ideas about each other (seniors thought the young volunteers would be impatient and unenthusiastic about spending time with them, and the students thought the seniors would be rigid and “old” in their thinking and quick to judge them). These ideas quickly got dispelled as they walked, talked, shopped, and became friends. They found out just how wrong their misgivings about each other were.

Participating seniors have reported feeling valued, empowered, and appreciated by their interaction with a younger generation. Students and seniors share their cultural backgrounds and introduce each other to new foods and traditions, discuss different ways of cooking food items and customs. They each enjoy the other's company, and it became more about the social interaction than the activity itself. Many parents informed us of the difference they have seen in their children since working with us - that they are calmer, better focused, more mindful, more communicative, polite and positive - even getting off their phones at home to talk with them. We also help our students/young volunteers and older adults see themselves in a more positive light.

14. Our older adults have been describing feeling better about their life in general. They are learning that knowledge is powerful support (i.e. what one's options are, putting things into perspective and good communication is vital to getting the appropriate and accurate information) and friendships are essential to enhance life's satisfaction and help to better deal with life's stressors.

We have older adults expressing that they have experienced more joy and feelings of being loved, appreciated, and valued - volunteers too!

15. There has been better understanding and communication between volunteers of all ages and older adults, so they have greater appreciation and sensitivity towards each other. Volunteers have been discovering that they can make a huge difference in a senior's life and older adults learn they still matter. Everyone involved feels being engaged is at least one purpose they have in life.
16. Visiting Neighbors' staff assist older adults with questions regarding health care proxy, living will, end-of-life issues and have necessary and often very difficult conversations.
17. We advocate older adult issues to help the public and our respective communities have a greater understanding of seniors' needs in the community, so seniors can age-in-place.

*We will continue to help older adults cope with the myriads of changes associated with aging in general, as well as address their specific issues and with the aim of preventing problems from becoming worse or from having disastrous consequences.*

18. Last year we provided direct services to 875+ older adults and gave guidance to 1700+ individuals including caregivers and community members who care about their older neighbors.

**Just as our older adults need us more than ever, we need your support more than ever!**

*We would not be able to do what we do, nor at the level and pace we have been working, without the support of our NY City Council and the Aging Committee Members!! **You in fact - are our heroes!** We need you to continue to be our champions, so we can continue to succeed as we have for the past 54 years and be here for our older adults moving forward. Your financial support and loving friendship enable us to continue to meet the growing needs for our services, especially the challenges faced by the oldest-old (age 85+) who often need more support from our staff, as well as helping those new clients asking for help. Yet, in this past year, we have started to see an increase in "younger seniors" (in their late 60s/early 70s) coming to us for the first time for help, usually due to an accident or illness.*

Thank you to our NYC Council's Aging Committee for giving us this opportunity to submit testimony and to the NYC City Council for caring about our seniors. We share with individuals - if you can't advocate for yourself, it is best to find/have someone advocate for you! *We need you to continue advocating for our city's seniors and for programs like ours that provide direct services in the community and that are compassionate, extremely cost-effective, and work.*

Sincerely,



Cynthia Maurer, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Visiting Neighbors, Inc.  
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New York, NY 10012  
[info@visitingneighbors.org](mailto:info@visitingneighbors.org)  
[cmaurervn@aol.com](mailto:cmaurervn@aol.com)  
212-260-6200





**SENIOR TALENT SHOW CELEBRATES VISITING NEIGHBORS'  
SERVING SENIORS SINCE 1972**



**As Part of The Chelsea Day Festival Visiting Neighbors Will Hold Its**

**32nd Annual Senior Talent Show**

**Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>**

**2 - 4pm at 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue & 20<sup>th</sup> Street**

We couldn't be more excited for the **32nd Year** celebrating older New Yorkers and the special dimension of vitality and wisdom they promote in our great city. Visiting Neighbors gives singers, dancers, and comedians a chance to strut their stuff before large crowds. Come cheer on these special performers demonstrating that "Talent is Ageless." This event is sure to warm your heart, help dissolve stereotypes about what seniors can – *and can't* - do and is an affirmation of the vigor and verve of older adults.

**PLEASE JOIN US**

This event is **FREE** to the public.

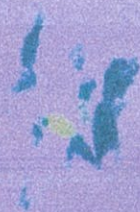


Dear Friends,

Happy Valentines

Day! I hope you

cat sweet  
treats and have  
a great time!

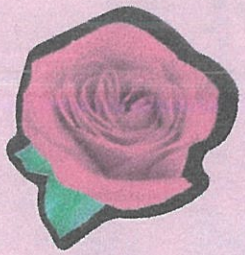


YOU  
ROCK



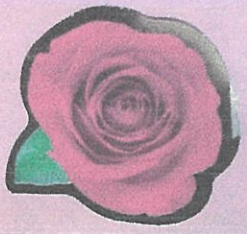
Happy  
Valentines  
DAY!

Have a nice day



From

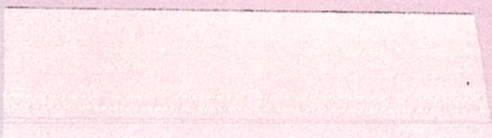
Dear neighbor,



Happy  
Valentines  
Day!

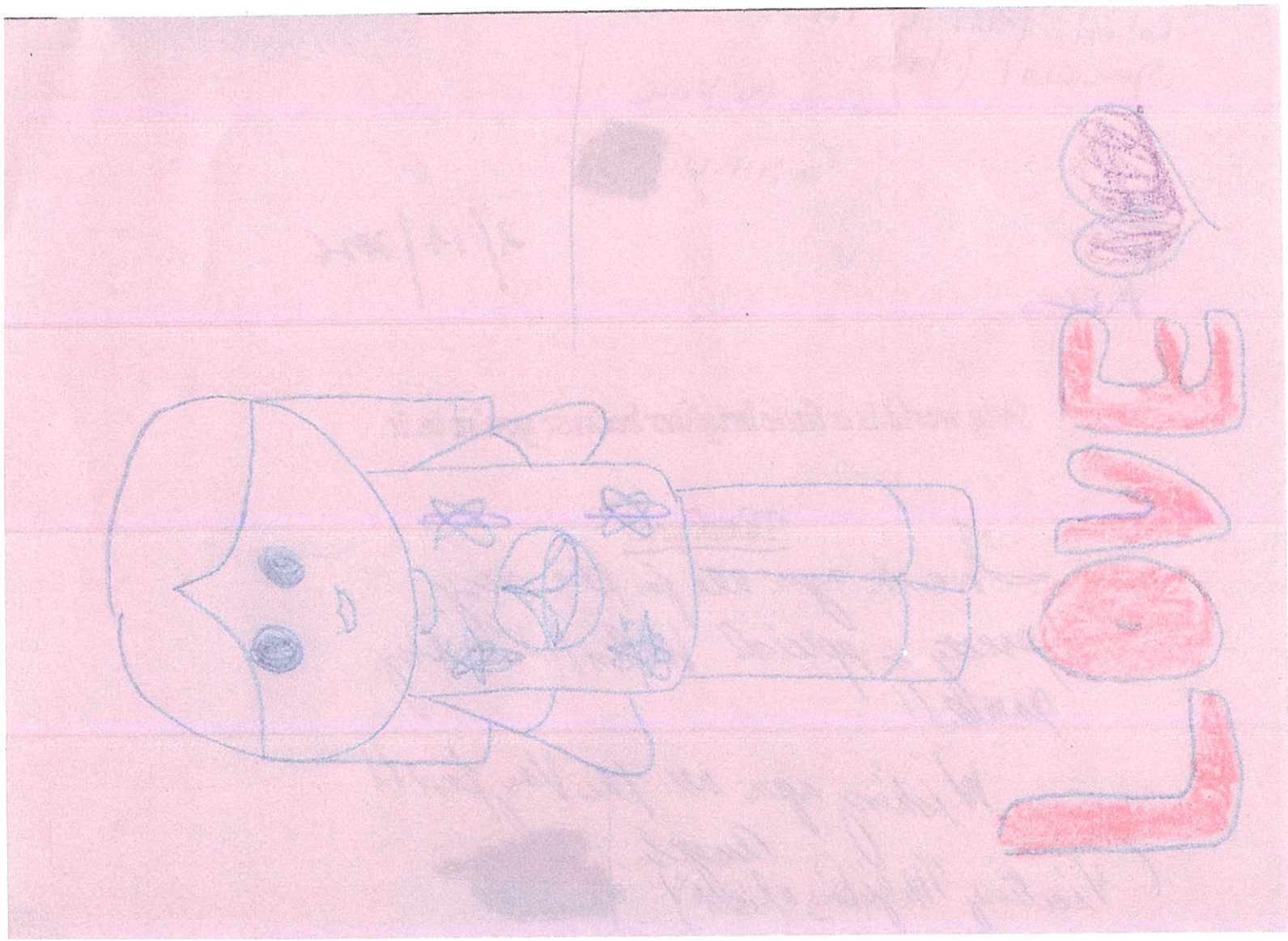
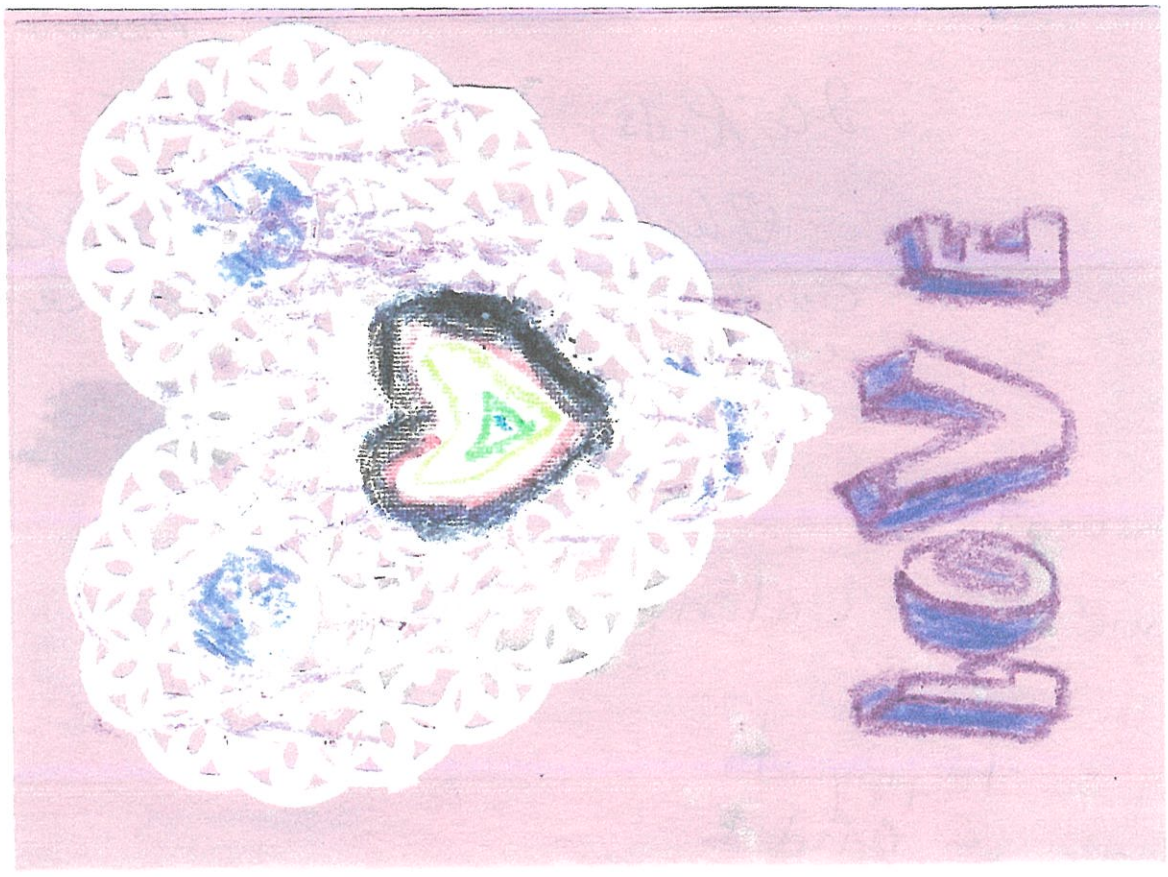


Love,



Student







March 2, 2026

Hi Kids,

Thanks for your awesome  
card - it really cheered me  
up.

😊 From [redacted]

Dear Student

I love your Valentine  
Card

I am so happy to  
have it and I  
will put it in a  
special place.  
Love to you

Ginny [redacted]

To  
ALL,

2/14/2026

*My world is a little brighter because you're in it.*

Thank you!

Thank you all for the very  
pretty + special Valentine's Day  
cards!!

Wishing you all the Very Best!!

(Visiting Magin's client) Angel [redacted]

You are an ARTIST...  
So Keep-~~it~~ on DRAWING.

And also, never be afraid to  
ask Questions in Life.

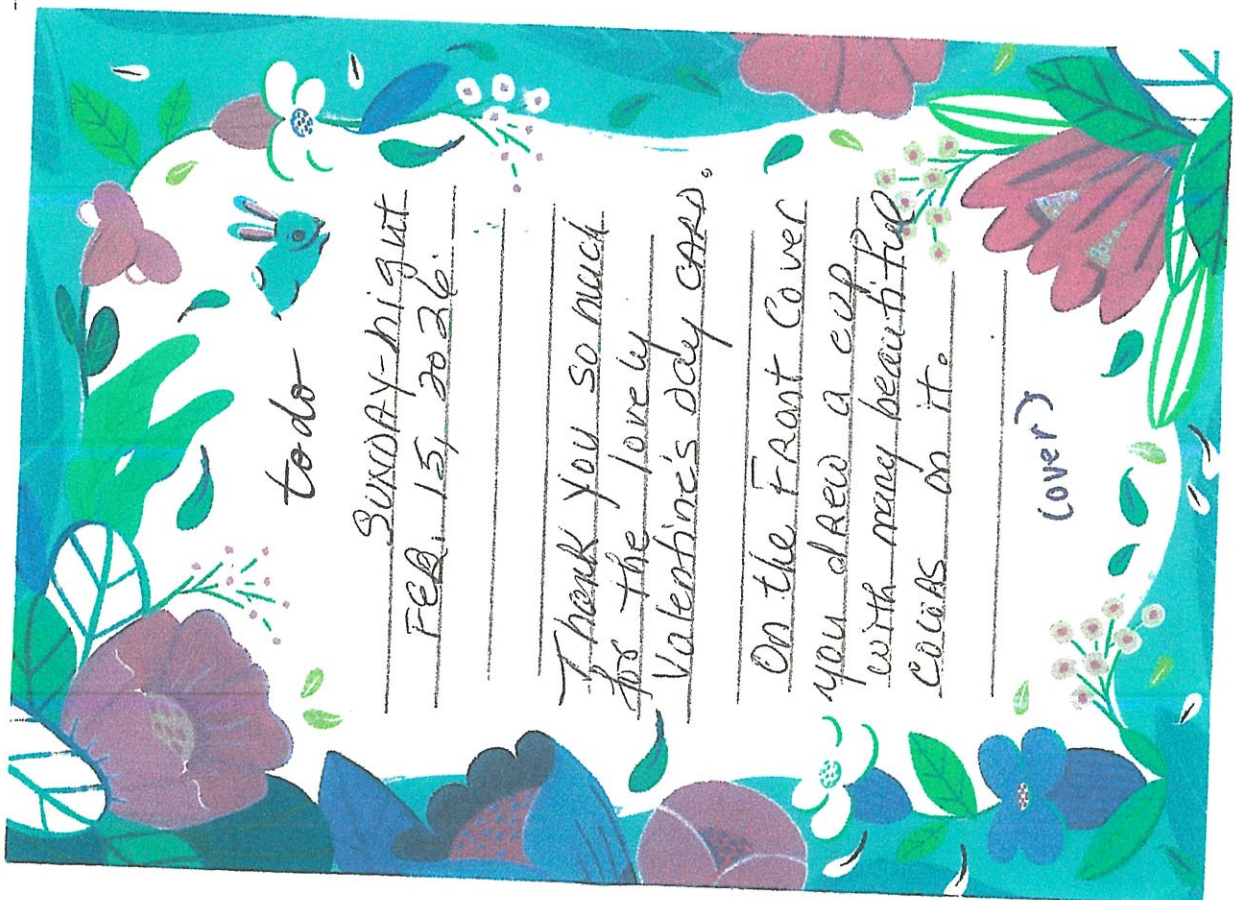
For w/questions comes  
Knowledge and with  
Knowledge comes confidence,  
which will help you  
get through many things  
in LIFE.

Thank you again for  
your beautiful card.

Dear Children,  
Thank you  
so much for  
the beautiful  
Valentine's Day  
card.

I love it!

Marilyn



2/14/2026

To the Friends who sent me the beautiful  
Valentine's Day Card -

Thank you so much. It was the  
best card I got!

I hope you had a happy  
Valentine's Day too.

Best wishes,

Janet

2/19/26

Dear Children

You brought tears to  
my eyes when I received  
your beautiful cupcake card.  
When I opened it to read,  
"You are loved" <sup>it</sup> brought  
more tears of affection  
and gratitude.

I thank you with all  
my heart for remembering  
me in your Valentine  
wishes. You are the "Best"!

Love,

Elizabeth

Thank you  
very much for the  
beautiful Valentine  
day Card -  
It made my day  
With love  
Paulette





Dear little friend,

Thank you for your beautiful  
Valentine card; it made me very  
happy, and it brighten my day!  
Keep drawing!!

Big Hugs & Kisses

Dear Valentine,

Thank you so much for writing to me,  
it made my day!

Please know that I am thinking  
of you and wishing all good things  
today and as you grow up.

Affectionately,

Cheryl R.

Please pass this card to the  
artist who made my fabulous  
Valentine's Day card,

I LOVED it! Beautiful colors  
and perfect sentiments.

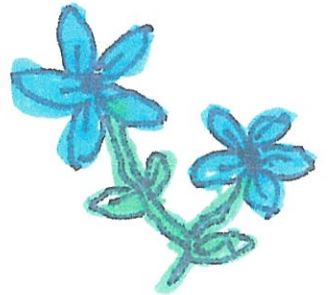
Thank you so much!



Made me HAPPY!

Edaine

Thank you very much for the  
lovely Valentine Card that was  
sent to me. It is delightful.



Julie February 14, 2026

Thank you for the beautiful  
Valentine's Day card. It really  
made my day!

I'm happy to have you as  
my friends!

From,  
Donna.



**VNS Health Written Testimony  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing**

Chair Zhuang and members of the Committee on Aging, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on supporting older New Yorkers and the programs that allow them to live safely and independently in their homes and communities.

We want to begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to the City Council for its continued leadership and investment in programs that support older adults. Your support for NORC programs, community-based services, and home- and community-based care has made a meaningful difference for thousands of older New Yorkers.

For more than 130 years, VNS Health has helped people live, age, and heal where they feel most comfortable — in their homes and communities. Today, VNS Health serves more than **117,000 patients, members, and clients each year across New York City**. The average age of the individuals we serve is **72 years old**, and in 2024 alone we served **more than 1,150 New Yorkers who were over the age of 100**. Our goal is simple: to ensure older adults can age safely, independently, and with dignity — while remaining part of the communities they helped build.

Across the city, we support this mission through a wide range of services including skilled home care, personal care services, hospice and end-of-life care, behavioral health services, and Medicare health plans that provide coordinated care for older adults. Our programs also serve specialized populations, including our Veterans Program and dementia focused care. Today, we want to focus on two of our programs for older adults that are woven into the fabric of the city: **Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) nursing and our community centers**.

**Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) Nursing**

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, or NORCs, transform residential buildings and neighborhoods into supportive environments where older residents can remain living independently while receiving coordinated health and social services.

With support from the City Council, **VNS Health nurses currently serve 38 NORC sites across all five boroughs**, serving a catchment area of more than **20,000 residents each year** and helping older adults manage more than **40 different acute and chronic health conditions**. Our registered nurses provide health assessments, preventative screenings, chronic disease education, care coordination, and referrals that help residents navigate the healthcare system. Just as importantly, they serve as trusted partners within the community — often becoming the first person residents turn to when they need help.

Our staff provide culturally and linguistically accessible services in languages including Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, Russian, and others, helping older adults navigate complex systems and connect to the care and resources they need.

One recent example illustrates the impact of this work: An older resident living in a NORC building became disoriented while walking in his neighborhood and lost his way home. Instead of panicking, he remembered the nurse who regularly visits his building and sought her out. Our NORC nurse was able to safely bring him home, conduct a health assessment, and identify

underlying health concerns that needed follow-up care. She helped schedule medical appointments and screenings and connected him with a free identification bracelet so that if he ever becomes lost again, neighbors and first responders can help him return home safely. This moment reflects what NORC nursing truly provides: trusted relationships that help older adults remain safe, healthy, and connected to their communities.

### **Sustainability and Funding Request**

At the same time, the need for these services continues to grow. Tens of thousands of older adults face the challenges of aging in place in New York City's NORCs, many of whom are managing multiple chronic conditions that require consistent access to health care and social support. However, **NORC nursing services are not reimbursable through insurance**, making City funding essential to sustaining these programs.

For Fiscal Year 2027, **VNS Health is requesting \$2.5 million to support the NORC nursing program**. Demand for NORC nursing continues to grow as New York City's older adult population increases. The population of adults age 65 and older was the only age group to grow in New York City between 2020 and 2023, and requests for NORC services continue to rise.

To meet this growing demand, **VNS Health is seeking funding to expand NORC nursing services to three additional sites in 2027**, ensuring that more older New Yorkers have access to these critical services.

### **Community Centers: A Lifeline for Older Adults**

Equally important to supporting aging in place are **VNS Health Community Centers**, located in Sunset Park, Chinatown, and Flushing, which serve as trusted hubs for older adults navigating health care, benefits, and social services. For the older New Yorkers these centers serve, many of whom have immigrated to the U.S. and speak limited-English – these centers, providing cultural programming and support accessing benefits, are often one of the only consistent touchpoints where they can seek help in their own language.

Recently, our teams have helped many older adults who experienced SNAP benefit theft or faced disruptions due to delays in benefits processing. Our staff worked directly with these residents to help file claims, navigate the system, and restore access to food benefits. Without these trusted community touchpoints, many older adults would face these challenges alone. Community centers help ensure that aging in place does not mean aging in isolation.

### **Conclusion**

Aging in place means more than remaining in one's apartment — it means remaining part of the fabric of the community. Programs like NORC nursing and community centers make that possible by bringing care, connection, and support directly into neighborhoods across New York City.

We are grateful for the City Council's continued partnership in supporting these programs and ensuring that older New Yorkers can age with dignity, independence, and community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.





Good Afternoon, I am John Holt, the Director of the Senior Law Project at Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS). For over 40 years VOLS has partnered with community based organizations and the private bar to provide free civil legal services to New Yorkers who otherwise cannot afford or access representation. Our five core projects serve small business owners, individuals accessing benefits, immigrant young people, incarcerated mothers, and older adults in every borough.

The VOLS Senior Law Project's focus is providing low-income aging New Yorkers with access to free, high-impact legal services that allow them to plan for death and incapacity through the execution of life planning documents, including Last Wills and Testaments, Powers of Attorney, Living Wills, and Health Care Proxies. For our clients, these documents are vital tools to help ensure that their wishes and preferences around health care decision making, end of life care, personal finances and benefits, funeral planning, and the distribution of assets after death are followed. Without these services, many of our clients would find themselves unable to safely remain in their communities, forcing them to enter into costly institutional care environments or be subject to overly restrictive protective arrangements, like Article 81 Guardianship.

Everyday in our work we see the real barriers older adults face in receiving these important services, often missing the window of opportunity where advance planning can be a viable preventative tool. Lack of information and resources, social isolation, cognitive and physical decline, exploitation and abuse all contribute to aging New Yorkers being unable to effectively learn about our organization and access our programming. To combat this, the Senior Law Project partners with older adult centers and other community-based organizations all over the city to provide older adults, and the professionals who work them, education on the importance of advance planning and clear direction on how to timely reach our program.

The City Council and our city agencies have been at the forefront of creating an accessible and livable New York in which older adults can safely age in their communities, but there is still work to be done. In the present moment many New Yorkers are afraid to present for services due to the policies of the federal government, and we need to continue to seek ways of building trust and community in what is the fastest growing demographic of older adults in our city: immigrants. We also see that even when older adults do access our city's systems there is not always clear identification of their interconnected needs, and that the responses are often siloed and address the presenting symptoms and not the root causes of the problems. Think of an older adult who receives assistance in housing court in a non-payment action. That person may receive effective assistance of counsel and prevent an imminent loss of housing, but for that success to be sustained other supports need to be identified and





offered, whether that is long-term care planning, benefits assistance, or attainment of legal advance directives.

The Senior Law Project respectfully calls on the council to continue to support and prioritize programs that reach aging New Yorkers in their homes and communities to provide holistic services that are responsive to their diverse financial, medical, social, legal, cultural, and linguistic needs and to ensure that legal service organizations like VOLS have the resources they need to continue to provide assistance that promotes autonomous decision making and closes the justice gap for older adults.

My name is Sonia Valentin, & I am an advocate for seniors in Bensonhurst & Bath Beach, Brooklyn as well as being a senior myself. I attend FIAO's community center where families and many older adults are served. I use the gym, take arts & crafts classes, participate in mental health group sessions & have meals there, but only on Thursdays or Fridays. On behalf of the two hundred older adults, I thank the City Council – the Speaker Hon. Julie Menin, and our very own Hon Susan Zhuang and Hon Alexa Aviles for the NORC funding allocated for our Older Adults.

However, we as well as other Older Adults on a waitlist would like to have these services every day of the week. These programs and services truly enhance the overall quality of life for me and our very diversified senior population of Latinos, Italians, Asians, Arabs, Russians, and Jewish residents.

We respectfully request your support for the NORC Initiative so to expand the services to 5 days weekly, as we also await the opportunity for the Dept. Of Aging to re-open RFPs for additional CBOs like the Federation of Italian American organizations (FIAO Brooklyn) to have a Senior Center for the ever-growing number of Southern Brooklyn Older Adults.

Many of our seniors are widowed, single & lonely. Attending these programs helps them mentally, physically, and emotionally. At FIAO Community Center they make friends, are not lonely, feel better about themselves, and have a reason to get up in the morning.

Thank you! Muchas Gracias! Mille Grazie!

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Catherine Thurston

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Service Program for Older People

Address: 302 West 91st

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Marcus Jackson

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Encore Community Services

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Lisa Scott-McKenzie, Commissioner

Address: 2 Lafayette Street

I represent: NYC Aging

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ines De La Nuez

Address: [Redacted] NY, NY 10002

I represent: Grand Street Settlement

Address: Grand Coalition of Older Adults

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jose Mercado, Chief Financial Officer

Address: 2 Lafayette Street

I represent: NYC Aging

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Linda Hoffman

Address: 11 Park Place

I represent: New York Foundation for Senior Citizens

Address: 11 Park Place NY, NY 10128



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lydia Ortiz - Weiss

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: University Settlement

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Katherine ~~Blanco~~ Svero

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: University Settlement

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anita ~~Arkwold~~ Kwok

Address: Su

I represent: United Neighborhood Houses

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Abbie Rubin-Pope

Address: 130 E 59th Street, New York, NY

I represent: UJA-Federation of NY

Address: 130 E 59th Street

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kalman Bokun

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Indialbero

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ben Finkel

Address: 780 7th Ave

I represent: AAAP

Address: 780 7th Ave

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Kevin Kiprovski (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Live on ny

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Elizabeth Lee (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 135 W 23<sup>RD</sup> ST

I represent: VISIONS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Mohammad Kazvi (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 1077 CONEY Island Ave

I represent: HALAL SENIOR CENTER

Address: -COPO-

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ludia M. ORTIZ-Weiss

Address: GRAND ST

I represent: Wellness Together -

Address: 189 Allen St. Grand St NY 10002

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 03/12/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Katherine Sero

Address: NY NY 10027

I represent: Wellness Together, University Settlement

Address: 189 Allen St Grand St NY 10002

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-12-26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eustacia Smith

Address: 39 W. 105th St. NY NY 10025

I represent: West Side Federation for

Address: Senior & Supportive Housing



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rohan Wu

Address: [REDACTED] Post Jefferson Section, NY 11776

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Abbie Robin-Pope

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: UTA Federation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-12-2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: AARON TAX

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: SAGE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-12-2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Holt

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Volunteers Of Legal services

Address: (elder law)

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-12-2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sabura Rashid

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Lower EAST SIDE Girls CLUB

Address: Center For Wellbeing

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Seamoff Estima

Address: 300 Lexington

I represent: Citymoals

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: MAR. 12 2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HEW ROSE EVANS

Address: [REDACTED] BROOKLYN, NY 11201

I represent: AMERICAN LGBTQ+ MUSEUM

Address: 45 W. 36<sup>TH</sup> ST, NEW YORK, NY 10018

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VIVIAN PATANIO

Address: [REDACTED] BKLYN NY 11228

I represent: FIAO

Address: 8711 18<sup>TH</sup> AVE BKLYN NY 11214

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Rizzi

Address: [REDACTED] BKLYN NY 11228

I represent: F.I.A.O.

Address: 8711 18<sup>TH</sup> AVE, BKLYN NY 11214

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CHRISTINE TSE

Address: [REDACTED] BLDG NY

I represent: FIAO

Address: 8711 18<sup>th</sup> AVE BLDG NY 11214

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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Shin

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Korean Community Services of NY

Address: 203-05 32nd Ave. Bayside, NY 11361

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sonia Valentin

Address: \_\_\_\_\_, BKlyn N.Y.

I represent: Community Senior Advocate

Address: 8711 18<sup>th</sup> Ave, 11214, BKlyn.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Cynthia Maurer

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Visiting Neighbors

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms