

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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March 25, 2026  
Start: 12:34 pm  
Recess: 5:54 pm

HELD AT: 250 Broadway-8th fl.- Hearing Rm. 3

B E F O R E: Elsie Encarnacion  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexis Avilés  
Gale Brewer  
Kamillah Hanks  
Rita C. Joseph

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

Faiza Ali  
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Commissioner

Lorena Lucero  
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Deputy  
Commissioner of Program and Policy

Jasniya Sanchez  
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Deputy  
Commissioner of Immigration and Strategic  
Initiatives, Chief of Staff

Melissa Mark-Viverito

Monique Francis  
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Ama Malak [sp?]  
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Brooklyn Defender Services

Karla Ostolaza  
Bronx Defender Services

Deborah Lee  
Legal Aid Society

Tania Mattos  
Unlocal

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

Allison Cutler  
NYLAG

Sierra Kraft  
ICARE

Rachel Jordan  
Safe Passage Project

Janet Miller  
CAMBA

Kelly Agnew-Barajas  
Catholic Charities Community Services

Christina Garrity [sp?]  
Pro Se Plus Project

Charles Brown  
Lutheran Social Services

Ralucca Oncioiu  
Catholic Migration Services

Aracelis Lucero  
MASA

Bethany Dill  
International Rescue Committee

Desiree Hernandez-Sanchez  
Catholic Charities Community Services

Luis Mancheno  
Legal Services NYC

Lucia Cuenca  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Paul Fleck  
Immigration Law and Justice New York

Jack Hsia  
Chinese-American Planning Council

Nikita Boyce  
Coalition for Asian American Children and  
Families

Ahyoung Kim  
Asian American Federation

Nilbia Coyote  
New Immigrant Community Empowerment

Timothy Fallon  
Her Justice

Ira Yankwitt  
Literacy Assistance Center

Kaveh Sarfehjooy  
Liz Smith Center for Adult and Family Learning at  
Literacy Partners

Sophia Shi  
Korean Community Services

Teresa Baik  
Korean Community Services

Maia Dillane  
Arab-American Family Support Center

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

Ernie Collette  
Mobilization for Justice

Tatiana Wolkowitz  
Children's Law Center

Joshua Santangelo  
Children's Law Center

Harold Solis  
Make the Road New York

Zeinab Eyega  
Sauti Yetu Center for African Women

Leidis De La Rosa  
La Colmena

Carolina Moreno  
Mixteca

Van Xelo  
Mixteca

Ligia Guallpa  
Worker's Justice Project

Alejandro Grajales  
Worker's Justice Project

Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez  
Street Vendor Project

Delsa Diaz [sp?]

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

Maria Guiracocha  
Worker's Justice Project

Willfredo Villatoro  
Worker's Justice Project

Maria  
Worker's Justice Project

Ricxu Bacus  
CUNY Law's Community Economic Development Clinic

Jennifer Argueta  
NMIC

Chia Chia Wang  
Church World Service

Dmitri Glinski  
Russian Speaking Community Council

Anh-Thu Nguyen  
Democracy at Work Institute

Amadou Ly  
Amadou Ly Foundation

Henry Lajara  
Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

Arlette Cepeda  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Edmond Loi  
Charles B. Wang Community Health Center

Melat Seyoum  
NYC NOWC

Riksang Gurung  
Adhikaar

Miral Abbas  
Coalition for Asian American Children and  
Families

Vladimir Tlali  
New York Immigration Coalition





SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to today's New York City Council hearing on the Committee on Immigration. At this time, please silence all cellphones. No one may approach the dais. Chair, you may begin.

UNIDENTIFIED: [speaking non-English]  
testimony@council.nyc.gov.

UNIDENTIFIED: [speaking non-English]

UNIDENTIFIED: [speaking Spanish]

UNIDENTIFIED: [speaking non-English]

UNIDENTIFIED: [speaking non-English]

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: [gavel] Good afternoon. Thank you all for being here today. I am Council Member Elsie Encarnacion, Chair of the Committee on Immigration. Welcome to today's hearing on the City's Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Budget. Before we begin, I would like to thank those who have joined us and acknowledge that I'm joined here by Council Member Schulman. Thank you. For hundreds of years, immigration has and will continue to be a fundamental aspect of New York City life. Nearly 40 percent of our city's population is foreign-born. This includes those who have had the opportunity to naturalize and

become U.S. citizens and those who have not.

Immigrants play an essential role in our local economy, and they have a similar workforce participation rate to US-born residents. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy reported that in 2022, undocumented immigrants paid \$96.7 billion in US taxes. In New York alone, undocumented immigrants paid \$3.1 billion in taxes to fund our state's public infrastructure and services. The contribution for all of our immigrants totalled a much higher revenue, and it is no surprise to us that immigrants continue to power our city. Our immigrant neighbors have also experienced grave need in recent years. In spring 2022, tens of thousands of asylum-seekers, adults, as well as families with children fled dire conditions in their home countries and arrived to New York City. The city underwent a crisis response to support the influx of new arrivals, and as the number of newcomers has steadied, the city has been reducing the emergency operations it created at this time. At the start of 2025, immigrant communities were met with a federal administration that aggressively prioritized a deportation agenda for both new and long-term

immigrants. In 2025, New York City experienced an increase in ICE enforcement activities across immigrant neighborhoods, including a surge in ICE arrests at 26 Federal Plaza targeting immigrant New Yorkers during check-ins and immigrant court proceedings. In January 2026, The Documented reported that street arrests in New York City grew by 212 percent to over 3,000 in the first six months in the Trump administration. At today's hearing, the committee will examine the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Budget and evaluate how the budget prioritized immigrant services and how the city intends to maintain and expand on last year's investments in immigrant programs. We will be asking the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs- you will hear me refer to them as MOIA- for accountability, transparency, and action. We will examine MOIA's collaboration with other city agencies and how that office carries out its roles and responsibilities. We will go over the various programs that MOIA manages, including the funding levels and number of individuals served, and we'll get a better understanding of the new and emerging needs of our most vulnerable New Yorkers. MOIA is the backbone of immigrant services in the

city. However, this office is currently operating with an unacceptably low headcount. In the current Preliminary Plan, MOIA's budget totals \$782,000 to cover five staff positions. MOIA's budget and the mayoral team does not provide a full picture, as the office coordinates and collaborates with other city agencies to manage MOIA programs within their agencies and their budgets, including HRA, DYCD, H+H, and CUNY. How can we expect an office to meet our immigrant community's growing need when it lacks sufficient centralized personnel to do the job? It is now more important than ever that we take the time to strengthen and expand our city's infrastructure to support immigrants for the years to come. As Chair of the Immigration Committee, I am encouraging OMB and MOIA to work towards creating a dedicated city agency for immigrant affairs. I also want to take the opportunity to say that the committee and I are looking forward to hearing from advocates and the community during today's public comment period. Given the limited time we have, I encourage you please focus your oral testimony on the community and budgetary needs, and know that we will review your written testimony to understand the full breadth of

work your organization does after the hearing. Lastly, I would like to thank the Committee staff, the dream team here, Florentine Kabore [sp?], Navdeep Bains [sp?], Nicole Cata [sp?], Rebecca Barilla [sp?], as well as my staff, Stephanie Herrera and Adam Bernstein for their commitment and hard work. And as always, the amazing Sergeant at Arms that help us get through the day. Before we from Faiza Ali, the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and her team, the Committee Counsel will swear you in.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. We will now hear testimony from the administration. We will from MOIA Commissioner Faiza Ali as well as Lorena Lucero and Jasniya Sanchez. Before we begin, I will administer the affirmation. Panelists, please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions? Thank you. You may begin when ready.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Good afternoon. Thank you to Chair Encarnacion, members of the Immigration Committee, as well as Chairs Lee and Deputy Speaker

1 Nantasha Williams who I know are diligently across  
2 the street talking to our colleagues at OMB. I also  
3 want to extend my thanks and gratitude to the  
4 committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify  
5 today. My name is Faiza Ali and I am the new  
6 Commissioner for the New York City Mayor's Office of  
7 Immigrant Affairs, or MOIA. I'm joined today by  
8 Lorena Lucero, Deputy Commissioner of Program and  
9 Policy, as well as my colleague Jasniya Sanchez,  
10 Acting Chief of Staff and Deputy Commissioner of  
11 Immigration and Strategic Initiatives. As a proud  
12 daughter of immigrants from Azad Kashmir, Pakistan,  
13 my intersecting identities have shaped how I think  
14 about the role of government and the responsibility  
15 it carries to serve every community in this city  
16 fairly and with dignity. As Immigration and Custom  
17 Enforcement has sowed fear and chaos in diverse  
18 cities across the country, I want to make clear that  
19 New York City remains committed to the protection of  
20 all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status.  
21 But this moment requires more than words. It also  
requires local government to provide us with a  
budget, operational capacity, and support that help  
us meet this goal. For today's testimony, I will

provide a brief update on MOIA and highlight key areas of our work that include immigration legal services, MOIA legal support hotline, our rapid response legal collaborative, language access, and community engagement programs. We have all watched, some of us in shock or disbelief as an aggressive and indiscriminate detention and deportation campaign played out on our screens. Over the last 14 months we've seen horrific reality of that agenda. Routine immigration court dates now often result in arrests by masked agents waiting outside of courtroom doors. Temporary protected status and other pathways for dignity and work authorization have been closed off without taking into account the dangerous conditions that precipitated the arrival of people to our country in the first place. ICE is being deployed to [inaudible] with its officers launching indiscriminate raids like those that have targeted our street vendors on Canal Street just this past October. The color of someone's skin, the language that they speak, and the religion that they practice have been justifications for arrests and detainment. Our immigrant communities and local economies are suffering from these inhumane actions. May of our

neighbors worry about taking the subway to work or to school. The usually bustling streets of some of our most vibrant neighborhoods are eerily quiet. Students in our public school system see the empty seat in their classroom and worry whether or not they will be next. Given this moment, immigrant communities need reassurances that city government will protect them. Mayor Mamdani was elected by New Yorkers in part to address the growing apprehension and anxiety among immigrants regarding their place in our society. It is our mission to affirm our city's support, to rebuild public trust, and ensure continued access to schools, health care, housing and city services. New York City is powered by immigrants. Through this year's city budget we have the opportunity to show that we will protect and prioritize our immigrant communities by investing in services and the support they deserve. MOIA's City Charter mandate is to serve immigrants and non-English speaking New Yorkers by developing and implementing policies designed to assist them, a responsibility we maintain, and remain steadfast in fulfilling. My team which is currently resourced with a budget of approximately \$42.3 million for FY26 will continue to go above and beyond



to elevate the needs of immigrant communities. We currently have more than 78 contracts with nonprofit organizations, many of whom are in this room today, that service immigrant communities throughout the city. Given the recent rise in ICE activity, MOIA has stepped up to provide more investment in legal immigration services than ever before. Over the past year, MOIA has risen to the challenge to strengthen our legal infrastructure during this time of greatly increased need. MOIA's immigration legal programs include Immigration Legal Support Centers, the Immigration Legal Support Hotline, the MOIA Legal Technical Mentorship Program, and the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative. Together, these programs and initiatives expand access to immigration legal support which has increasingly grown in demand. Last summer, we launched MOIA's Immigration Legal Support Centers supported by more than \$18 million in investments over three years to support up to 25 community-rooted organizations providing culturally and linguistically-responsive immigration legal assistance. Our immigration legal services infrastructure consists of 29 unique providers across five boroughs. Since the program's launch in July

2025, the network has conducted nearly 9,000 comprehensive legal screenings, supporting immigrants on a variety of legal needs. All MOIA center's program providers have free access to select online and webinars to a nationwide legal technical assistance program through CLINIC, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. The MOIA Legal Technical Mentorship program also provides dedicated support to the legal services network, and in FY26, the IJC, the Immigrant Justice Corps, is also offering additional legal technical support for legal support centers. Having access to multiple legal technical assistance programs and resources is important for immigration legal professionals to maintain their professional ethical duties, to be trained, and to support the professional growth of their staff and volunteers in order to advance informed decision-making on advocacy and program operations. Providers are also connected to trainings and resources that allow them to respond appropriately to federal policy changes. Another critical resource available to immigrant communities is the MOIA Immigration Legal Support Hotline which is also operated by Catholic Charities Community Services and helps New Yorkers explore their options

to comprehensive immigration legal screenings. So far this year, the hotline has received over 14,700 calls. For FY26, MOIA increased funding to expand and strengthen the Immigration Legal Support Hotline to improve accessibility, responsiveness and support for callers with increasingly complex immigration needs. The hotline expanded its staffing capacity including the hiring of additional counselors and a staff member specifically designated to respond to time-sensitive rapid response needs. The hours of operation were also extended beyond the previous schedule for Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. so that callers have more opportunities to reach outside the standard network of hours. Additionally, MOIA made significant investments in language access and technology. The hotline launched WhatsApp communications, expanded reporting from four to 10 languages and is currently adding three new interactive voice response language prompts which are expected to be completed in the spring. Finally, MOIA has made use of our Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, or the RRLC, which provides legal assistance to immigrant New Yorkers who are detained or at imminent risk of detention or deportation. To

adjust for the current need, MOIA increased our investment in rapid response legal efforts by \$3 million this fiscal year. MOIA has also coordinated rapid response efforts in schools to ensure immigrant families receive timely information and support when immigration enforcement activity occurs near- in or near their communities. This includes connecting schools, families, and community partners with legal resources, Know Your Rights information, and direct services. Referrals are centralized through Project Open Arms, a dedicated team within the New York City Public Schools that coordinates across all schools including charter schools, District 75 and District 79 to support immigrant families and ensure that families have a full range of services. Next, I'll provide an update on MOIA's language access network, an area where we have made significant strides. MOIA oversees, monitors and provides technical assistance to over 46 city agencies in implementing language access services. This work goes far beyond immigrant affairs. It is a critical infrastructure that touches every corner of city services, impacting almost \$1.8 million New Yorkers with limited English proficiency. As such, this is not simply a matter of

checking a box or ensuring compliance, but an area where the city must take a whole of government approach to advancing language justice. In addition, MOIA has built in-house language services team that provides language and interpretation support to mayoral offices and City Hall. In calendar year 2025, MOIA's language access team delivered translation services to 41 mayoral offices and agencies, provided on-site language support at migrant centers across the city and played a critical role in rapidly translating evolving messaging on shelter protocols for recent arrivals. I want to discuss next our English learning programs. Learning English continues to be a priority for immigrant communities and remains a key workforce development strategy. To increase the capacity for English language learning, MOIA operates English learning and support centers at public libraries, library branches, and community centers located in immigrant-dense neighborhoods. In FY26 so far the program has served nearly 3,000 unique learners and has seen 800 graduates. These centers use our awarding We Speak curriculum to host in-person English classes. Additionally, we have developed comprehensive beginner-level materials

which have been frequently requested by communities and advocates. Our curriculum aims to improve access to both English language learning and familiarity with city services. Finally, MOIA's community engagement work creates pathways for immigrants to navigate and access services and to know their rights during this perilous time. Through our immigrant rights workshops, our team has made presentations that serve as additional entry points for community organizations and their clients to connect to free, high-quality immigration legal services. In fiscal year 2026, this program delivered nearly 300 presentations that reached nearly 6,000 people across the city, continuing our critical role to reach our diverse communities where they are. Additionally, in calendar year 2025, our external affairs team reached nearly 37,000 direct touch points through resource fairs, Know Your Rights presentations and canvassing. Over the past four years, resources at MOIA's website were also downloaded over 1,430 times by nearly 79,000 users. In calendar year 2025, MOIA has led 10 community and ethnic media round tables to share vital information with our immigrant communities through Hyperlocal newspapers and TV stations in their

own languages. These roundtables further strengthen city governments' relationships with immigrant-focused, trusted media outlets that deliver accurate and timely news to New Yorkers. Finally, I wish to thank the city's hardworking public servants who have responded to the needs of both recently-arrived and long-standing immigrant New Yorkers. And thank you, of course, to our Chair Encarnacion, members of the Committee on Immigration and Finance for calling today's hearing. I look forward to working with the Council to fund and strengthen the programs that serve our immigrant communities who are indeed the backbone of our city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you, Commissioner. I'd like to acknowledge Council Member Gale Brewer for joining us and give the opportunity for our Public Advocate to say a few words.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair. As you mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate for the City of New York. I'd like to thank Chairs Encarnacion and Les and the members of the committee for holding this important hearing. Chair Lee, it's always great to see you, so

it makes me smile as well as having an administration that will actually let you do your job. So, I'm very excited about that. New York City is home to more than 3 million immigrants, even more if you count sons and daughters and immigrants and grandsons and granddaughters of immigrants and grand siblings [inaudible]. It is this diverse tapestry of people that makes our city so special. Immigrants are our friends and families, neighbors, teachers, business owners, civil servants, our neighbors and friends and so much more. Right now they are under an unprecedented attack on their civil human rights, as each of us have a responsibility to protect them. Similarly, city's sanctuary laws are also under attack. New York City has had laws in place that limit how the city can interact with federal immigration enforcement since 1989 when Executive Order 124 was first enacted by then Mayor Ed Koch. City agencies are prohibited from sharing information about immigrants with federal officials, unless they are suspected of criminal activity. ICE is not allowed to arrest immigrants at courthouses or other state government facilities, and the NYPD and DOC are barred from honoring "detainer requests" from ICE,



except in some limited circumstances. Our sanctuary laws do not shield criminals as many claim. In fact, the city is allowed to honor detainer requests for individuals convicted for more than 170 different crimes including rape and murder. Despite all of the fear mongering about sanctuary cities, these laws make us all safer, and these protections allow immigrants to report crime, serve as witnesses, and access schools and city services without fear. These large-scale immigration enforcement operations also divert resources away from initiatives that actually promote safety. The focus on detaining people from following immigration proceedings and check-ins has turned immigration process. Even the people how do it in the "right way" into a minefield. I personally witnessed federal agencies seizing people as they exit the immigration hearings, and it's very devastating. It teaches people to fear appearing in court or attending the check-ins [inaudible] disincentivizing complying with the law and attending these hearings. With this last danger at courthouses, it is most important than ever to robustly fund immigrant legal services. Last year, Mayor Adams and the City Council nearly doubled the amount budgeted

for legal services, including lawyers for unaccompanied minors who are often representing themselves, including preschool-age children. We must continue this commitment to legal services. I'm glad to see the Preliminary Budget increases funding for deportation defense, MOIA Legal Support Centers, and other legal services in FY2027 and future years. MOIA also offers connections to a range of services for immigrant New Yorkers that are now more critical than ever, including English classes, mental and medical health care, including housing assistance and IDNYC cards. This is crucial in ensuring that immigrant New Yorkers can support themselves and their families and integrate into their new communities like many have done before them. With many avenues for federal assistance cut off or too risky to apply for city supports can fill those gaps.. A budget is a moral document. We have to step up where the federal government has stepped back. City agencies are for the people who live and work in New York City. not to serve dubiously legal dangers and wasteful [sic] immigration enforcement operations. Every person in our city and in our country has an inalienable human civil rights. We

1 cannot let the humanity of the president rolled out  
2 on humanity. Now even more concerned with ICE agents  
3 at our airports, trying to recover- trying to take  
4 over from TSA agents who haven't been paid in a  
5 while. All of this is only getting increasingly  
6 terrifying, and I'm hoping the city can do even more  
7 to address that fear. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you very  
8 much. Hello. So, we're going to go right into it.  
9 I- you know, the Preliminary Plan includes about  
10 \$780,000 for MOIA in fiscal 2027, mainly for the five  
11 positions that it in-houses, and this funding really  
12 hasn't changed, nor has the headcount changed since  
13 we adopted the budget last year. We also know that  
14 additional staff located under several different  
15 agencies are dedicated to supporting MOIA, and I'm  
16 assuming that that's what you referred to when you  
17 talked about the- that your organization is resourced  
18 by \$42.3 million. So, I wanted to get an idea of what  
19 exactly the titles and responsibilities for the five  
20 positions that are shown in MOIA's budget, what they  
21 do, what are the positions and their  
responsibilities?

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, currently two of those five lines are active. They're being occupied by- one is myself as Commissioner for MOIA. The other is for my Director of Communications. You know, I am- to your question about staffing, you know, I started a little bit less than a month ago and right now we are currently assessing our vacancies, the number of vacancies we have and the process to help backfill those to build support up for MOIA.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, so two for now. A total of five or six?

COMMISSIONER ALI: There's five dedicated to MOIA.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. And can you also describe the number of staff housed under other agencies? And I know that's a big number, much bigger than the one you have. But maybe a general overview of their roles and responsibilities?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah, that's a great question. Thank you, Chair. So, there are 64 staff lines that MOIA utilizes across the city. 59 of those, of the 64, are housed under other agencies, and I'm happy to follow up with you on the specifics.

1 But to your question about the role that these staff  
2 play, these staff lines are used to support the  
3 day-to-day operations of MOIA. They- anywhere from  
4 administering programs to policy to administrative  
5 work in the office, language access, and outreach.  
6 And so we're happy to follow up with more details as  
7 you need them.

8 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. And then  
9 I'm wondering- and I know that this is something that  
10 as you're coming in and starting to fill those  
11 positions, how will the workload be split among the  
12 staff that you do have under MOIA? And do you feel  
13 that that would be sufficient staff to officially  
14 fulfill your mission?

15 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, I'm still  
16 evaluating the office structure, like I mentioned,  
17 that there are quite a number of vacancies that are-  
18 I would like to prioritize filling. You know, the  
19 specifics right now in terms of the structure, I  
20 don't have them right now to share with you, because  
21 I am evaluating and specifically looking at where  
staff are housed, whether it's in the outreach bucket  
or, you know, policy bucket. Where can staff be  
moved to really strengthen the work? That process

1  
2 is- I'm still, you know, very much under way, but the  
3 priority is to fill those vacancies as soon as  
4 possible.

5 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And have you  
6 requested any additional funding for the headcount  
7 and the programs for this fiscal year or the  
8 out-years?

9 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah, so we were very  
10 pleased to see some new funding, \$16.1 million that  
11 was added in the Preliminary Budget and baseline  
12 funding. I know how much Council- you know, as a  
13 Council alum, I love to hear the word baseline- you  
14 know, for MOIA and that breakdown is \$14.6 million  
15 for the Rapid Response funding and legal support  
16 centers, and \$1.5 million for MOIA English and-  
17 support centers. So we know that this initial  
18 investment really represents a commitment from the  
19 Mayor to support immigration legal services, to  
20 support immigrant communities, and we are in ongoing  
21 discussion with OMB on how do we deepen that further.

22 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. And will  
23 MOIA move to putting out multi-year contracts that  
24 preserve the option to implement funding that is  
25 responsive to emerging needs? Considering the

1 immigration landscape is constantly evolving, we held  
2 a roundtable not too long ago, and a lot of the  
3 providers are talking about how much they need to be  
4 able to react to the things that are happening, and  
5 those things may not necessarily fall within the  
6 lines of a contract, and so the ability to shift is  
7 really important for them. So, do you consider  
8 putting contracts like that out?

9 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. We are in the  
10 process of engaging our contract providers. You  
11 know, I would like to meet them just to sort of  
12 understand better what their needs are, but to answer  
13 your question directly, I'll turn it over to my  
14 colleague.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: Thank you,  
16 Chair, for the question. As the Commissioner  
17 mentioned, we're in the process of assessing where  
18 the gaps are in any additional needs now that we have  
19 this funding that has been baselined. It also allows  
20 us to plan, you know, medium-term and longer-term and  
21 being more intentional, alright, about how this  
funding is allocated so that we are more- so that  
these allocations are more efficient, right? We're  
also working closely with a contracting agency, the

1 Department of Social Services to explore all of our  
2 options, right? Our goal is ensure that there's  
3 continuity in services, right, and improve the  
4 delivery of the services, right? And we are looking  
5 at all of the- all of our procurement options, right?  
6 You know, to be able to plan in the longer-term.

7 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: No, and you  
8 talk about planning. You're planning more with the  
9 agencies that you deal with. Do you do any planning  
10 with some of the community-based organizations that  
11 are doing the work on the ground?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: So, I will  
13 let the Commissioner also chime in, but part of the  
14 process, right, it's engaging in conversations with  
15 the community-based organizations, right, to  
16 understand and hear more about what's going on the  
17 ground, right? Are there any new needs that are  
18 emerging that we might not be aware of, right? And  
19 so to be able to figure that out and how to address  
20 those things.

21 COMMISSIONER ALI: I'll just add that we  
meet with our contract providers on a quarterly  
basis, so it's not just during the budget time, where  
we are asking the question of what are the exact



needs on the ground and are those needs being met with the current contracts.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Great. And then Commissioner, you have now had some time to review-- not much time, but some time--

COMMISSIONER ALI: [interposing] I had some time.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: to review the structure and the mission. What are some of your priority areas for fiscal 2027?

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, protecting and empowering immigrant New Yorkers is a defining commitment of this administration. And so as commissioner, I've been working to ensure both that we have a vision, but also the capacity to really deliver on some of those key priorities. I mentioned a few of them in my first hearing just a few weeks ago, what those priorities include in ensuring immigrant New Yorkers know their rights and can access services safely. That-- those priorities also include coordinating across city government agencies to make sure that they're aligned and prepared to support really the long-term stability of immigrant communities. Priorities also include, you know,

1 integrating immigrant families into the city's larger  
2 affordability agenda. And you know, that includes  
3 expanding benefits and creating workforce pathways  
4 and small business support. And I'll just sort of  
5 close with the thing that I care very deeply about,  
6 as someone who comes from community, centering the  
7 lived experiences of the most impacted is what I  
8 believe drives really strong and effective policy  
9 making, and so our goal is to, you know, enhance our  
10 community engagement with not just our providers, but  
the communities who are impacted the most.

11 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: I'm glad to  
12 hear that, and speaking of centering the lived  
13 experience, I know that many of our immigrant  
14 families are experiencing a lot of mental health  
15 issues as a result of what they're experiencing from  
16 the federal government, including depression, PTSD,  
17 substance abuse, anxiety, and so much more. How do  
18 you see MOIA engaging with families facing those  
19 mental health issues? Are there any specific ad  
20 programs, outreach, engagement tools that you may be  
21 using to inform immigrants about mental health  
services?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. Thank you, Chair. MOIA has recently been in touch with the Office of Community Mental Health, NGBV, the Academy. These are partners that we work very closely with to really better understand the landscape of resources that are available for immigrant New Yorkers. That work is ongoing and we really look forward to identifying ways that we can help bridge that gap and support mental health. I'll highlight just a few things that we are currently exploring and working on, specifically working with the hotline to incorporate our learning into the scripts [sic] wherever they may be a gap, identifying more collaboration between MOIA, the Office of Community Mental Health, NGBV, and really the stakeholders, outside organizations, and then finally developing new and uplifting existing resources for immigrant New Yorkers in partnership with the partners I've mentioned.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Do you use any ethnic media for ad campaigns? Can you speak a little bit about that?

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, MOIA hosts monthly ethnic media roundtables on a variety of topics.

1  
2 Last- we hosted 10 ethnic media roundtables last  
3 year, and one was dedicated to mental health. We've  
4 also included other topics around back to school and  
5 labor rights. So, it's quite a variety. We have two  
6 upcoming roundtables as well, so I'm really proud of  
7 the work that our team does to really engage the  
8 ethnic media community.

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: But I'm also  
10 assuming that some people will rely on NYC Care for  
11 health coverage in the near future. So, should  
12 someone enroll in NYC Care, what options exist for  
13 mental health services there if you are aware?

14 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, NYC Cares offers  
15 several services, including high-quality mental  
16 health and substance abuse services. They also offer  
17 a primary care provider, and so that provider can  
18 refer individuals to appropriate resources which can  
19 include a social worker, a therapist, a psychiatrist.  
20 So that we know includes in-person screenings, but as  
21 well as virtual health and mental health services.  
We as MOIA, and I said this previously as well, we  
continue to encourage New Yorkers to enroll in NYC  
Cares. All city residents are welcome to apply  
regardless of immigration status. We- also, I'll add

one last thing that we also provide NYC Cares fliers at our outreach events that are translated into a variety of languages. We include information in our English language classes. So there are quite a bit of ways that we actually promote NYC Cares and just to encourage the participation.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Perfect. And shifting gears, but kind of staying in line with that, can you talk a little bit about MOIA's partnership with H+H and how both entities ensure that immigrants are not afraid to seek care?

COMMISSIONER ALI: MOIA and H+H maintain routine communications, and in the past we've collaborated on providing policy updates to their teams. Last year, our office worked with H+H and DOHMH to publish an open letter to immigrant New Yorkers, really emphasizing the need for them to seek care, explaining the various options that are available to them as well regardless of status. So we have a good working relationship with H+H. H+H also like many other agencies sits and is part of our- MOIA's interagency taskforce on immigration. So that is routinely where we share best practices,

changes to policies, things that impact immigrant New Yorkers.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. I mean, I know that, you know, the reality is that we- I really want to make sure that they're being aggressive about those campaigns, because unfortunately the truth of the matter is that we cannot afford for folks to only be using those services as emergency services, right? We want them to be using them as preventive services and preventive health care, and so I'm really hoping that that is a part of the conversation we're really getting in front of it. Also, you know, federal public housing requires at least one household member to have an eligible immigration status. However, on February 20th, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development published notice of proposed rule-making that would require immigration for everyone living in HUD assisted housing which will harm mixed-status families. Can you talk a little bit about what steps MOIA has taken to collaborate with NYCHA? We just had our NYCHA hearing yesterday. We asked this question. I asked this question of NYCHA, and while seem empathetic, they are fully funded by the federal government and so it is quite a cause for pause. So,

1  
2 can you talk a little bit about your collaboration  
3 with NYCHA?

4 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. And  
5 specifically as it relates to this proposed change,  
6 MOIA is working with NYCHA and other agencies to  
7 submit a public comment. In response to the proposed  
8 change and I'll add again that NYCHA also sits on our  
9 MOIA's interagency Taskforce. So, we look forward to  
10 kind of- continuing to engage them on how do we  
11 respond to this potential change.

12 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. Yeah, I  
13 would love to see some, you know, regular policy  
14 updates, making sure that they're aware of that  
15 process, and also for them to do maybe a visual  
16 campaign. I have 23 NYCHA developments in my  
17 district, and I would know if there was one, very  
18 clearly. So, I know that 311 is also one of the main  
19 ways residents report issues, ask questions about  
20 city programming and getting help accessing city  
21 services. What is your partnership with 311?

22 COMMISSIONER ALI: We have a great working  
23 relationship with 311. We coordinate with them on  
24 calls related to immigration. So, calls that are  
25 made to 311 are either routed to our legal services

1  
2 hotline that's run by Catholic Charities, or they're  
3 routed to the general MOIA hotline. We engage with  
4 311 on an as-needed basis as well just to address any  
5 sort of trends that we may be seeing. Both MOIA's  
6 hotline and the- MOIA's hotline and our legal  
7 services hotline. Also, keep track of calls that are  
8 coming in. They can in fact also track those calls  
9 and can identify when someone has called from 311 as  
10 well.

11 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And-

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO:

13 [interposing] If I may, Chair, add one thing?

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Yes, please.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: I would also  
16 just add to what the Commissioner laid out. We have  
17 been very intentional about meeting with them and  
18 providing them up-to-date policy changes. So when  
19 our website was updated with resources, we ensured to  
20 walk them through that. And we have continuously  
21 relied on them, too, on best practices and guidance  
even for our own MOIA legal support hotline. They've  
also flagged- there are- the Commissioner mentioned  
spikes on specific issues. They report them to us,



and we work with them to identify, you know, where to go, things like that.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Yeah, I've been seeing an influx of reports of housing conditions as one of the main issues that people are really afraid to mention, that- their status, but they're living in really deplorable conditions because of it, and so I just want to make sure that we're doing everything that we can to track those 311 calls, especially when it's heat, hot water related, all of those things, because there may be underlying issues that are not specifically talked about as immigration-related issues, but it could definitely be a part of it. I'm going to go over one last topic before I open it up to my colleagues who are here, because I know that they have some time. But I wanted to talk a little bit about the immigrant survivors of domestic violence. Between 34 to 50 percent of immigrant women in the US have experienced domestic violence. This figure increases to 77 percent for immigrant women who use immigrant status- whose immigrant status is dependent upon their spouse. You know, they have really experienced a lot of gender-based violence at extremely high rate. Given that

1 survivors of gender-based violence are at an  
2 incredible vulnerable subset of the immigrant  
3 population, how do you prioritize supporting that  
4 specific demographic?

5 COMMISSIONER ALI: Thank you, Chair. In  
6 my last hearing, and I think I mentioned this up top  
7 as well, one of my current priorities is to really  
8 increase our policy teams capacity to expand reach of  
9 our efforts. Our office is a member of the Brooklyn  
10 Human Trafficking Taskforce, and so through this we  
11 are engaging with other city and state stakeholders  
12 around servicing this population. We are also in  
13 close communication with the Mayor's Office to End  
14 Gender-based Violence on really a variety of topics,  
15 but we are actively looking for ways to expand work  
16 with specifically this population as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And I'd also  
18 like to add, the other subset, the LGBTQIA+ community  
19 as well. Can you give me a little bit about what  
20 you've worked on there?

21 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, this, you know,  
22 we're very excited to work with Director Taylor Brown  
23 [sp?] of the new Mayor's Office of LGBTQIA Affairs.  
24 This is another area, Chair, that we are hoping to

really increase our work and explore more partnership.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: I encourage that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: If I may add, Commissioner? There was also a Local Law that was passed last year. I'm forgetting the number, but MOIA's also working with- in consultation with MOERJ to conduct an assessment right now in regards to resources in gaps for transgender, nonconforming and non-binary folks. So that's work that's ongoing right now. I would also say with the new roll out of the legal support centers, there are also providers there that are increasing touchpoints with folks who self-identify, and that's another area that we're also exploring and working on.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: That's great. And so I'm going to pause there to give my colleagues an opportunity, but I'll be back. So, Council Member Schulman?

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you very much. And I just want to say it's really nice to see the Commissioner here, and I couldn't think of anybody better to fill that role, so congratulations

1  
2 and look forward to working with you. And so, a  
3 couple of questions I have. One is, there was a  
4 report recently about taskforces in different  
5 agencies around the sanctuary city law, is that new  
6 staff? Is that- is there extra money for that? I'm  
just curious how that's going to work.

7 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. I believe you're  
8 referring to the Interagency Response Committee that  
9 came from the Executive Order-

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER ALI: that was signed by  
12 mayor, Executive Order 13. That taskforce is a  
13 combination of both the FDM's office, the Special  
14 Chief- the Chief Counsel's office. MOIA has a  
15 leadership role at the table as well. In terms of  
16 staffing, I believe that is outside of MOIA, but it's  
17 something that our- the special advisor to the FDM is  
18 currently working on. I will say that we are in  
close communication and working very collaboratively  
with our partners on the IRC.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: When it's  
20 finalized, if you can get us that information, that  
21 would be great. Also, I know you talked about- you

1  
2 have a comms director, and I know you talked about  
3 earned media. Do you have any paid media that you  
4 do?

5 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, we are currently  
6 exploring a Know Your Rights campaign that will  
7 include a combination of both paid and unpaid ads  
8 that will dispersed throughout the city.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So, the  
10 question I have- so, as you know, ICE has been  
11 dispersed to the city's airports as part of the TSA  
12 issue, whatever. The problem is my understanding is  
13 that the airports are kind of exempt from the  
14 sanctuary city law, is that correct? The reason I'm  
15 asking is, is there any kind of campaign or thought  
16 about identifying people that would be traveling or  
17 potentially traveling that we could also make sure  
18 that they know their rights? Because today there was  
19 a woman that was picked up by TSA, pointed out- not  
20 here, in San Francisco- to ICE agents and arrested  
21 and sent back to Guatemala with her little kid.

22 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, our sanctuary city  
23 laws, you know, are limited to city agencies.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

1  
2 COMMISSIONER ALI: And how we, you know,  
3 cooperate with immigration enforcement, and it- and  
4 the limitations around that. I will say that we are  
5 concerned with the reports that we're hearing of ICE  
6 agents that have been confirmed at airports. In  
7 fact, MOIA did release an advisory just yesterday  
8 just to inform travelers on what to expect and give-  
9 and provide tips on how to travel safely if they are  
10 engaging at the airports.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And I'd like to  
12 see, like, community-based organizations that know  
13 about some of these people who are traveling or  
14 having plans to or whatever, because we don't want  
15 people to fall through the cracks.

16 COMMISSIONER ALI: No, we agree. We  
17 pushed out our advisory both on our social media  
18 channels but also to our contracted providers through  
19 a newsletter announcement that went out to ensure  
20 that CBOs who are working with these vulnerable  
21 communities have the information that they need.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Because  
23 especially at La Guardia Airport which is basically  
24 the airport we're talking about, that-

25 COMMISSIONER ALI: [interposing] Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And JFK, there's a ton of immigrants that go through all the time. With that, Chair, I'm done. But thank you very much, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. Really quickly, the media advisory that was put out, what languages was that put out in, do you know?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah, we can get that for you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. I'm having a lot of questions about which languages. Okay. I'd like to now recognize Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much, and congratulations. So, a couple of things. When we were across the street, the Budget Commissioner stated when asked about which agencies are working on immigration, because people were concerned, he pointed to you and said that you're coordinating it all. How is that happening? Was it- then he went to the next question.

COMMISSIONER ALI: I have very mighty-

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] So,  
3 my question to you, is it through the taskforces? Is  
4 it through the 64 people? How do you keep all the  
5 agencies that are working on this focused on the  
6 issues that are so important?

7 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. Council Member,  
8 thank you for that question. It is a tall task for a  
9 five-foot-two woman. It's a challenge, but I will  
10 say that we accomplished all this work. Really the  
11 unsung heroes are the staff and the team at MOIA who  
12 have been here working diligently long hours, 24  
13 hours a day, working with our contracted providers.  
14 So, I want to first and foremost acknowledge the tem  
15 at MOIA, and I'm happy to be joined by many of them  
16 here. And it's our contracted providers. These are  
17 folks that we contract, organizations, CBOs who are-  
18 I know come from these communities, who service these  
19 communities that really do and provide the important  
20 work of whether it's legal services, language  
21 services. It takes quite literally a village.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so that-  
19 but that, I think- I agree with that. But I think he  
20 was talking about the other agency, so that's also  
21 part of what you're talking about?



COMMISSIONER ALI: So, the agency-

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I  
can give you- you all know. You know, Department of  
Education, Department of Health, the list goes on.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Right. And we  
mentioned there are a couple- there are a few  
different avenues where we work with other agencies.  
The interagency taskforce is one where, you know, we  
have partnerships across the board. You know, we  
provide policy updates. We get- we share best  
practices, that is one avenue. And then we have  
individual projects. I know- I'll turn it over to my  
colleague to talk about some of the partnerships that  
we have with the DOE.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Thank you,  
Commissioner. And we mentioned this briefly in the  
last hearing as well, but we are working with the  
Department of Education and we incorporated one of  
our programs into the school. So we are working with  
them on the Rapid Response Collaborative in schools,  
and what it is, it's a dedicated touchpoint for  
students, parents, and/or immediate family members  
who might live with said student to access legal

services. We work with Project Open Arms which is a dedicated team at the Department of Education.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm familiar with them. We'd like the Commissioner to come to District Three April 15th or May 13th, open arms, District Three- largest one. Keep going, sorry.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: No. But just to talk a little bit about the model and the work that we're doing- there is a centralized touchpoint to connect said people to services if they're at imminent risk of detention or if they were detained. In addition to that, we have also created programs for Know Your Rights that are dedicated to three groups of people directly to students who might be impacted. So you can think about some young people ages 16 to 20 who might be in school. A pocket of- another set of Know Your Rights training for parents, and then a third subset is for educators, parent coordinators and the such, and that's work that's been ongoing, and I would say, you know, pretty successful-

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] The reason I bring it up also, I go to all the budget hearings, and then I pick up pieces. So, Learning to

1 Work is an example at District 79. I happen to live  
2 with a whole bunch of these migrants and  
3 asylum-seekers in my house. So I am familiar with  
4 all the programs, and one of them, apparently, might  
5 be cut. That is so helpful to your population. And  
6 number two, at Small Business, at that hearing, we  
7 asked because the freaking feds have cut anybody who  
8 is an owner, immigrant, small business, can't get  
9 federal money. That's half of the small businesses  
10 in the City of New York. So, the city is going to  
11 try through the small business other funds to come up  
12 with money. But I'm just saying there's- every  
13 single agency is impacted by this situation with the  
14 President. So, that's why I'm talking about  
15 coordination. So, I don't know if that's something  
16 that you're working on. I assume you are.

15 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah, that is  
16 something that we're working on with our agency  
17 partners, but as well as our partners at OMB.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then  
18 just finally, adult literacy, that's important for  
19 everybody. Doesn't have to be just this community.  
20 But my understanding is the Coalition for Adult  
21 Literacy presented a proposal to DYCD for \$21 million

1  
2 for more funding, and I think there is \$12 million in  
3 the FY27. so, that would be an example that I hope  
4 you would advocate for this funding in the new  
5 administration. Well, with this administration, with  
6 OMB. The reason I say this is these classes are  
7 already over subscribed, and I have to say from my  
8 experience, adult literacy is the number one issue.  
9 If you're going to get through the GED, if you're  
10 going to get- which is what my crew is trying to do.  
11 And if you're also trying to just get a job. So how  
12 are we dealing with adult literacy?

13 COMMISSIONER ALI: Council Member, I am  
14 not familiar with the exact proposal, but we are  
15 happy to review that and several back with advocates.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I think the issue  
17 is you're involved unfortunately with everything in  
18 terms of these agencies.

19 COMMISSIONER ALI: We touch a little bit  
20 of everything.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes.

COMMISSIONER ALI: And we have good  
partners at agencies who are ready to do the work.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: And if I  
3 can add, [inaudible] with regards to adult literacy,  
4 as part of the Preliminary Budget, we have now an  
5 additional \$1.5 million that was baselined for our  
6 English classes, right? So that will also allow us  
7 to continue programming. Currently are collaborating  
8 with all three library systems in the city, so we  
9 have ongoing classes all throughout the five boroughs  
10 in multiple library branches in immigrant dense  
11 communities.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very  
13 much.

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. I  
15 guess, just to piggyback off of Council Member  
16 Brewer, I'm trying to figure out if there is a  
17 mechanism by which you track all of these- the  
18 agencies that you do have contracts with? So, not  
19 just through meeting and touching base, but how are  
20 we necessarily tracking what they're doing, what  
21 they're working on, when they're working on it, if  
they've accomplished the mission, who they're  
contracting with? Is all of that funneled through  
that interagency conversation or is there like some  
kind of mechanism which that is tracked?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah, I can walk you through some of the work that we've been doing on the legal service side. And I think that this is really sort of lessons learned from the last couple of years in regards to new arrivals coming in and really trying to figure out and hone in on how we centralize and streamline services, right? So, we have regular meetings and communication with other agencies that provide legal services for immigration legal services. So, for example, the Department of Social Services, NGBV, DYCD, and I think I always miss one. But we touch base in regards to our new programming so they're aware of what we're having. We're in close communication if there is an RFP that maybe one agency might be thinking about or putting out of lessons learned and target areas in neighborhoods that we're working with. So that's very intentional. It happens frequently with legal service provider side. On the English language learning side, we also connect with DYCD, but it's more based on pedagogy and just sort of best practices to incorporate into our services as well. So, those are two examples that I can share with you now.

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: And just  
3 briefly to add sort of on sort of the more fun part,  
4 the administrative piece and contracting. Our  
5 contracting agency is the Department of Social  
6 Services, and that's also where really the bulk of  
7 the immigration legal services live under HRA. so,  
8 we have, you know, a working relationship with that  
9 agency. We have the ad goals [sic]. We do work very  
10 closely with those teams as well, not only in the  
11 programmatic side, but also taking a look at  
12 contracts across the board.

13 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, thank  
14 you. So, the Preliminary Plan- and now we're going  
15 to switch over to legal services which we just spoke  
16 about- includes new funding which we're very excited  
17 to see, \$6.7 million in fiscal 26, \$21.3 million in  
18 fiscal 27, \$20.9 million in fiscal 28, \$19.2 in  
19 fiscal 29. What exactly will this additional funding  
20 be used for?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: So, we're  
very excited about that additional funding. We don't  
have- I don't have the breakdown for all of that  
funding for legal services. Specifically for MOIA  
that means that we have now an additional \$14.6

1 million that was baselined, and that's to fund- to  
2 continue funding for our legal support centers as  
3 well additional funding for our Rapid Response Legal  
4 Collaborative program. So, specifically, you know,  
5 for that funding we're still in the process of  
6 finalizing what allocation looks like for next fiscal  
7 year, and like I mentioned earlier, you know, one,  
8 we're highly focused on ensuring that there's  
9 continuity in services and also in the medium to  
10 long-term working on efficiencies to be able to  
allocate funding more efficiently.

11 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Are you looking  
12 to create new programs at all?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: We're still  
14 in the process of evaluating all of that.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. And so  
16 given that the funding is baselined, will there be  
17 new RFPs that go on for any of these new  
18 programmings? Is that the plan?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: You know,  
20 we're still looking at all of our options, right?  
21 This funding just got baselined. Right now, most  
immediately we want to- we want continuity of  
services, but again, nothing is off the table, you



1 know, as we plan- as we finalize planning for medium  
2 and longer term.

3 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. And so  
4 now I'm going to switch a little to start talking  
5 about our city's sanctuary policies, something that  
6 we had our first hearing on. We'll continue to talk  
7 about it. There'll continue to be legislation about  
8 it, but on February 6th the Mayor issued Executive  
9 Order 13 to strengthen the city's sanctuary  
10 protections, right, and that primarily barring ICE  
11 agents from entering city-owned properties without a  
12 judicial warrant. Can you provide an update on the  
13 interagency response committee that was established  
14 pursuant to that Executive Order?

15 COMMISSIONER ALI: Chair, before I get to  
16 that question, I want to go back to your question  
17 around languages for the advisory. So, so far, the  
18 English is being translated into the top 10  
19 languages, and we will also include Hindi and  
20 Punjabi, and those are expected to go up as soon as  
21 possible. To your question on the interagency  
response committee, so you know, it is a response by-  
a crisis response body that coordinates and manages  
policy responses across city agencies during a

1 crisis. Any crisis, but it also includes escalating  
2 federal immigration action. So, the members of the  
3 committee, as I've stated before, the First Deputy  
4 Mayor who's going to be serving as Chair, the Chief  
5 Counsel, Special Advisor for Strategic Coordination  
6 and Operations for the FDM, and myself. As MOIA's  
7 Commissioner, I am serving in a leadership capacity  
8 at the IRC and we're working really closely with this  
9 team.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And how often  
11 does it meet? Is it quarterly as well?

12 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, the Interagency  
13 Response Committee right now is actively sort of in  
14 communication and working in coordination with the  
15 city agencies to meet some of the earlier deadlines.  
16 I know that's- a focus has been largely placed on the  
17 May 7th aligned for the audit. So, we know that that  
18 work has begun. The IRC is also beginning to meet  
19 with stakeholders actually this week. So, that work  
20 is- has commenced.

21 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. I'm going  
22 to take a pause acknowledge my colleague Council  
23 Member Joseph, and she'll ask you some questions.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Oh, wow, I like  
3 that. Okay, okay. Good afternoon, everyone.  
4 Commissioner, always great to see you. Thank you for  
5 being here, and on the record just also want to thank  
6 the administration for the great partnership we did  
7 on the TPS video done by the Mayor. I thank him for  
8 that. We want to talk about HRA. I know it was  
9 baselined. We want to find out are there going to be  
10 an expansion, or is there going to be a Haitian-led  
11 organization. As you know, TPS is currently now in  
12 the Supreme Court.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: I think you  
14 meant, HRI, the Haitian Response Initiative. We are  
15 currently part of what the Commissioner laid out a  
16 little bit earlier is that we're currently assessing  
17 all programs to see where the new funding that we  
18 received will be allocated, so that's part of the  
19 assessment as well with HRI.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay. How many  
21 organizations do you currently have in the HRI  
system?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: We have-  
give me one second, just finding my- get my page. We

1  
2 have eight. So it's seven CBOs and then Catholic  
3 Charities that provides services, legal services.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay. And the  
5 Preliminary Plan included \$1.6 million in fiscal 2026  
6 for the HRA. For fiscal 2026, the Council added an  
7 additional \$600,000 in discretionary funding to  
8 further support six Haitian-serving not-for-profit  
9 organizations. Can you provide an update on this  
10 program, including the number of people served in  
11 2025?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: So, for the  
13 Council's additional funding, I don't have that  
14 number. And for the program that we oversee, in  
15 FY26, 333 individuals have been screen and 120 cases  
16 have been filed.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And what is the  
18 projected budget for the Haitian Response Initiative  
19 in 2027?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: It has been  
21 baselined as of this fiscal year at \$1.6 million.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Have the needs of  
the Haitian community shifted or evolved in the past  
year? We know it has. We have 300- I've done  
videos. I've been outside rallying and doing press

1 conference as 350,000 lives are looming, because now  
2 we're waiting for a decision. Any other plans to  
3 support the community in helping maybe change some of  
4 their statuses?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah,  
6 there's- that's a great question and something we've  
7 been thinking a lot about. Part of what we've done  
8 to tackle some of the issues, particularly with the  
9 looming or potential end of TPS, is that we have  
10 shifted to move the services. Currently, what we are  
11 doing- well, one, we're bringing clinics into a  
12 neighborhood so they are now- and this is during FY26  
13 we've made that change where they're coming into the  
14 CBOs directly, as well as supporting individuals who  
15 might be having questions that are being prepared, as  
16 well as we're currently working on providing  
17 resources. We know that TPS looming, there are a lot  
18 of issues that have come up regarding housing, work,  
19 and things like that. So there are resources that  
20 we're currently producing and putting together for  
21 that community as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Even in terms of  
guardianship as well as children who are born here  
and parents who may have to leave and all of that

1 stuff. I know I hosted a session in my- in a  
2 neighboring district on that.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yes. So, we  
4 have- just generally we have standby guardianship  
5 information for the general public on our website,  
6 but in addition to what we do with the HRI  
7 collaborative, part of it is also training. So we  
8 also have Catholic Charities come in and provide  
9 updates regarding- which are really a reflection of  
10 the most common themes and issues that the  
11 organizations are facing, and that was one of them as  
12 well.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. And  
14 also wanted to ask around- I know you know this is  
15 going to come- around young people. One of the  
16 things we did in this last year's budget is support  
17 unaccompanied minors. Is that going to continue?  
18 And how many young people have you seen in that  
19 program?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: So, in  
21 regards to whether there will be programming changes,  
22 we're still, again, identifying gaps in needs. And  
23 then I do have a number for you, but I'm just looking  
24 for it in my binder, in regards to the work. And

really thanks to the Council, too, for providing funding-

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: [interposing] We were steadfast on that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: That's right, and we're very thankful. But in regards to- if you can give me a minute, I'll get it.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Yeah, no problem. No problem. Meanwhile I can ask another question. Chair, is it okay? Thank you. The Council also funded Literacy Assistance Centers, and ICARE for both CBOs to coordinate and provide technical assistance to providers funded under the adult literacy forward initiative, and those fundings under the SIJS, Unaccompanied Minors and Family initiative, which total \$733,000 in the fiscal 2026 for these program. Can you provide details about the use of that funding, and what does these programs, mentorship, assistance and coordination entail, and what is the goal of the funding?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: For that, we're going to have to circle back, because we don't manage those programs, so we don't have specifics,

1 but we're happy to look into that in follow-up  
2 [inaudible].

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: You'll work-  
4 you'll work with the other agency to make sure-

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ:  
6 [interposing] Yeah, we'll-

7 COMMISSIONER ALI: H+H.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Is the amount of  
10 funding that we provided for The Door to support  
11 young people whether they're in the foster care,  
12 whether they are in unaccompanied minors, or whether  
13 they are asylum-seekers as well, enough to support  
14 the young people that we have? As you can see,  
15 dealing after 10 months and Muktar is out now. So we  
16 want to continue to support young people. As we're  
17 reading reports, immigration had become the most  
18 dangerous thing to young people in this city.

19 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. And as part of  
20 our process between Preliminary and the Executive is  
21 to actually evaluate some of these programs and see  
where the gaps in opportunities are and work with our  
partners in OMB to address some of those needs.



COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And is there any other agencies that we're doing interagency work with? You know, I think other agencies should be talking like me at city public schools, DYCD. There should be interagency conversation about a comprehensive plan for our young people in this city.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: I can jump in here. We are in active conversations with DYCD, ACS, and the Department of Education on issues regarding youth and then to give you the number because I found it- as you talked about it sort of- the funding that came in from City Council, we don't have clear oversight on that in numbers, but I could share in regards to numbers that we supported with the transition of the asylum application- application help center and young people that were supported. There's a list of about 200 youth who needed continued legal services and ultimately 69 youth were assisted with SIJ applications. That number- what that number is is because we also had to get consent from young people to actually follow up. So I just wanted to share that number. And one more thing, because the team is pinging me, we're also working on putting together a family preparedness phone bank

1 that would- that's happening this month in  
2 collaboration with Catholic Charities. Actually,  
3 next month.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Well, thank you.  
5 Thank you very much for this. Chair, thank you so  
6 much.

7 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Of course.  
8 Thank you. And you know- so I know that a lot of the  
9 conversation has been around those interagency  
10 conversations, taskforce conversations. Is there a  
11 quality check that MOIA does to see that that  
12 information has trickled down to the people that are  
13 on the ground, and that those conversations or the  
14 things that those agencies have said that they are  
15 going to give information on, that that's actually  
16 reaching the people that are facing our immigrant  
17 communities?

18 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. Outside of our  
19 quarterly meetings for the interagency taskforces,  
20 our team are in regular communications. I'll say  
21 that I'll lift one team in particular, our language  
access folks are in constant communication whether  
it's, you know, DYCD, DOE. We had a strong meeting  
and conversations with our partners at NYCEM just to

1 ensure that these aren't just sort of one-off, you  
2 know, meetings or translations that happened, but  
3 that language access is actually bendy in the work  
4 that they do. So, I feel confident in those  
5 conversations. They happen outside of not just  
6 within the taskforces, but they happen on a regular  
7 basis outside as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Alright, great.  
9 And so when- back to the sanctuary city laws. I was  
10 wondering if there were any recommendations that MOIA  
11 is providing to the city agencies to ensure  
12 compliance with the sanctuary policies. And if you  
13 can talk a little bit about what that timeframe is  
14 looking like to conduct trainings that are related to  
15 Executive Order 13 across all of the relevant  
16 agencies?

17 COMMISSIONER ALI: One thing I think is  
18 really important to kind of restate and be  
19 unequivocal about is that this administration is in  
20 fact committed to ensuring that no city agencies are  
21 cooperating with ICE in ways that violate our laws.  
So, I want to put that on the record. And you know,  
that commitment we know is not just in words, but it  
was codified in the Executive Order that lays out

1 very clear accountability measures for agencies. You  
2 know, to the question about trainings, we're really  
3 hoping to uncover is- through the audits is a better  
4 understanding of what the training capacity right now  
5 looks like. We imagine that, you know, there will be  
6 some gaps and we're looking forward to evaluating  
7 those. And in terms of timeline, agencies do have up  
8 until I believe it's May 7th to submit those reports.  
9 So we're hoping to evaluate those and put out  
10 recommendations. You know, transparency is really  
11 important and so the recommendations will be posted  
12 on our website.

13 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: So, you  
14 anticipate that all city agencies will be trained to  
15 some degree even with the gaps that exist, or are you  
16 assess the gaps to see which ones will and won't?

17 COMMISSIONER ALI: We are planning to  
18 assess the gaps first, and then move forward with our  
19 series of recommendations, but there is a commitment  
20 for sure to make sure all city agencies are trained,  
21 and know exactly how to, you know, interact with the  
public, how to interact with agencies that know their  
responsibilities under the sanctuary city law.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Can you describe a little bit about your model for rapid response outreach. I know you spoke about it a bit, but maybe talk a little bit more in depth about the model for rapid response.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. It's really two-fold. I'll start with sort of looking in-house within MOIA. One of the things that I really would like to sort of see reflected in some of the changes within MOIA is a more robust rapid response capacity that we have. You know, that means building sort of stronger systems. That means faster coordination with our legal service providers, and also training some of our own staff. You know, we have a number of- I believe it's 10 community liaisons right now that I really would like to see trained as organizers who can, you know, go out into the community should there be a need, and work with our partners on the ground. We also have a dedicated team that is providing information to the community through our external affairs and community engagement work. These folks are out. They're tabling. They're conducting really important Know Your Rights trainings and working really closely with our

1 partners. So, that's sort of on the in-house side.  
2 You know, externally, the great work of our providers  
3 is- I think can't be overstated. You know, the folks  
4 who manage our rapid response legal support hotline,  
5 you know, they're- the Rapid Response Legal Support  
6 Centers, but our hotline as well- I mentioned this in  
7 our testimony, the staffing capacity has expanded and  
8 there is a dedicated person specifically for any  
9 rapid response concerns that may arise. So, it is a  
all-of-the-above approach to rapid response.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you for  
11 that. I mean, I think that that's one of the things  
12 like even on the ground in my community there are  
13 many, many community members that want to get  
14 involved, and some items are forming their own rapid  
15 response networks. It's very difficult for them to  
16 get proper education, make sure that they're doing  
17 correctly, so that we are not kind of chasing our  
18 tails in a moment of extreme need. So, I'm really  
19 hoping that we can make sure that any community  
20 member that wants to be a part of this can know where  
21 to go and get those resources. How do you- how does  
the administration propose delivering services to

1  
2 detained and non-detained immigrants facing  
3 deportation?

4 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, when cases are  
5 flagged to MOIA, whether it's through the hotline,  
6 through direct interaction with constituents- or we  
7 actually get oftentimes referrals from Council  
8 Members and other elected officials. We connect  
9 those individuals to our legal service providers  
10 based on sort of the specifics of their case. If a  
11 constituent reaches a general MOIA staffer, then that  
12 staffer also connects them to our program team, and  
13 so we have like a tree within MOIA to one, evaluate  
14 sort of the case and make the referrals  
15 appropriately.

16 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And have you  
17 found any need for additional resources? How much of  
18 an expansion do you think would it take to adequately  
19 meet the needs for legal services?

20 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. I'll say this,  
21 that there is always a need to fund and support more  
organizations doing really critical work. You know,  
historically many of these programs that support  
immigrant communities have been funded, you know,  
through one-shots or one year at a time in the

1  
2 Adopted Budget, you know, but seeing their- you know,  
3 a new commitment from this administration in the  
4 preliminary \$32 million overall to support or expand  
5 services is very promising. And so, we are very  
6 grateful for that investment. We know that the  
7 long-term- there is a long-term commitment to  
8 immigrant legal services, that these are  
9 unprecedented levels of need, and that is something  
10 that we are constantly sharing and flagging for our  
11 colleagues at the mayor's office as well as OMB.

12 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, great.  
13 I'm going to pause. My colleague has thought of  
14 another question, so I'm going to give her an  
15 opportunity to ask.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: We're taking a  
17 commercial break and back to me. When I spoke about  
18 the MOIA technical mentorship assistance and central  
19 coordination, that is your program. And I know that  
20 you're outsourcing through IDP [sic] and IARC. I  
21 wanted to know what type of work or coordination will  
you be doing with these vendors?

COMMISSIONER ALI: You're correct. I  
think we were responding to the ICARE program. So,  
for LTM, we introduced the Legal Technical Assistance



1 Model in FY 26, and it provides legal assistance to  
2 our support centers that are a part of three-year  
3 contracts. So, you are correct- teacher Rita is  
4 always keeping me in order- that IARC is our lead  
5 provider. They focus training on really emerging  
6 issues, including habeas corpus trainings. They are  
7 really responding I believe to whatever needs come up  
8 in that current moment. We also have another legal  
9 technical assistance program called LTA- big fans of  
10 acronyms- that really expands also on the immigration  
11 legal training resources, technical support for  
12 MOIA-funded organizations.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Gotcha [sic]  
15 gotcha. So, you know, one of the things that we're  
16 uncovering and is becoming so real is this fear for  
17 asking for help which is a really big issue and it is  
18 critical for these services to get to folks. In  
19 November of 2025, the U.S. Department of Homeland  
20 Security proposed a new rule to make accessing public  
21 benefits harder for immigrants by giving officers  
more discretion and potentially expanding the factors  
or benefits considered a public charge. Is- are you

collaborating with HRA on developing guidance around potential changes in the Public Charge policy?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Thank you, Chair, for that question. We are in fact working with partners at DSS, at DOHMH, at NYC Health to develop an updated flier with information, that it's making sure that it's also available on our website. This same coalition of agencies and partners was also in close communication with our legal service providers. Earlier this year, regarding three different instances of public charge that came up in naturalization cases, and we're also working with DSS and DOHMH to submit a public comment in response to this rule change.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And you know I'm going to ask about the languages for those fliers, right?

COMMISSIONER ALI: We're going to ensure that at the very least they're translated in the top 10 languages, and then we'll assess other languages as needed.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Yeah, yeah-

COMMISSIONER ALI: [interposing] And  
Chair, now that I know this is important to you, I  
will make sure you get-

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: [interposing] It  
is.

COMMISSIONER ALI: that information.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: It is. I mean,  
you know, as we face constituents every day and with  
all of the changes, all of the misinformation, we  
need a trusted reliable source that is going to give  
them the most up-to-date information as possible that  
they know that they're getting that information from  
a trusted source, and that they are not fearful of  
seeking that help because they understand it. It's a  
trusted source.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: So, last month,  
the New York Attorney General announced that they're  
launching a new initiative called Legal Observation  
Project, the Legal Observation Project, to monitor  
federal immigration enforcement activity in the state  
for potential legal violations. Are you working with  
the Attorney General's office or been in contact with  
them about the rollout of this initiative?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. We are- MOIA is supportive of efforts to monitor federal immigration enforcement activity for potential legal violations and really welcome the collaboration with the AG's office. We are in touch with the AG on other matters, and we- but on this in particular we don't have much to report.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Sorry. I had to get some water in. I want to now touch a little bit on the closure of the migrant shelter and mail processing center. The Office of Asylum-seeker Operation was created in March 2023, and you know that that was a response to the influx of migrants in New York City. Can you provide an update on MOIA's current involvement with the asylum-seeker response and how the city's response and support has changed in this past year?

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, MOIA has always served all immigrants, both recent arrivals and long-term residents regardless of which office or agency is established- you know, is running that given program. We continue to work with DSS and DHS to share timely updates and are providing front-facing material for their clients.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: So, the- OASO's responsibility was shifted to MOIA and DHS.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: I can jump in here. I would say that as the Commissioner laid out, MOIA has always been central, and this is sort of a central theme of today's hearing in regards to many responses that impact immigrants. I would say that when OASO was closing, we worked collaboratively with them to ensure that there were access points for subset populations for legal services. So, the example that I spoke about a little bit before in regards to young people who were identified as potentially such eligible is a group of individuals that we worked with to ensure that services continue to provided. As OASO was closing down or the asylum application help center in particular, because that's where we had more of a role, we ensured that folks who were being served by them had access going to legal services.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Now, the last remaining shelter for migrants is planned to close by the end of 2026. This will result in roughly 2,000+ people being dispersed throughout the DHS system. How is the administration ensuring that the

immigrants affected by shelter closures receive timely and clear information in their preferred language about their options?

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, we've been working with DSS and DHS on language access, in particular, issues at Brookner [sp?] and continue to work with them as the need changes.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And we also learned that the administration is closing the centralized mail center for asylum-seekers which is located in the migrant shelter in the south Bronx, which is in my district. The mail center is scheduled to close at the end of this month in March. Do you know if the admin has a solution on how people will continue to receive important immigration court documents? As you know, this is very important, especially those who have used that address and are waiting for mail.

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, as individuals are re-integrated into DHS, they will receive mail at their assigned sites. We also understand through DHS that have been communicating with impacted individuals about mail forwarding. On sort of the

exact details, we would defer to DHS for the most current information.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. This is why we need one agency so that we can get these answers. So, we're going to switch gears a little bit and talk about advancing immigrant worker protections. I know that we'll be talking about this a lot next month as well. But you know, obviously, many of our immigrant workers face exploitation and unsafe working conditions, and that is very often compounded by fear related to their immigration status. Last year, the State Department of Labor created the New York State Bank on online resources designed to connect job seekers with employment opportunities. So, my question here is how are immigrants informed about their rights at work? How is this disseminated? Are there costs associated with these measures?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Sorry. This is response- in regards to the New York State Bank?

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: I read ahead. Excuse me.

COMMISSIONER ALI: It's alright.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: I'm going to get back. Just put that question in your pocket. The question around the State Bank was MOIA's usage of the New York State Bank, if any, and if sharing it as a resource- and has it shared it as a resource to any of the members of the community?

COMMISSIONER ALI: I think on that question, we're going to have to circle back.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Got you. Alright, so now I'm going to my second one which you've heard. How are immigrants informed about their rights at work, and how is that information disseminated? And are there any costs, more importantly, with those languages other than English?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. So, MOIA's working really closely with Deputy Mayor Sue [sp?] and her team to really further integrate MOIA into the economic justice portfolio which we're very excited about. We're looking to- you know, exploring opportunities and looking to expand collaboration with some of the other agencies in that same vertical, including DCWP, SBS and DOB. You know, one of my priorities, as I mentioned earlier a few times, is really to bolster the work of our outreach team



1 and we really look forward to sort of, you know, work  
2 with our partners at the Office of Mass Engagement  
3 and other agencies to really best determine like how  
4 do we conduct outreach to this particular population?

5 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Yeah, I think  
6 we'll learn, you know, especially next month about  
7 like the impact that that has on our small businesses  
8 on our business communities, our commercial corridors  
9 and what we're really seeing out on the streets. I'm  
10 going to take a pause to recognize Council Member  
11 Krishnan. Do you have a question? No? Not right  
12 now? Alright, he's thinking on it. So, how does MOIA  
13 budge prioritize workforce development programs for  
14 immigrant communities?

15 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, currently MOIA's  
16 program focuses on immigration legal services, Know  
17 Your Rights, English classes and other support  
18 services. In this- under this sort of new  
19 administration and new MOIA, I think being part of  
20 that economic justice portfolio is something that  
21 we're currently still assessing and figuring out ways  
to actually integrate that throughout the office and  
through the existing programs. And with respect to  
your specific question on your funding, no specific

1 funding was allocated to MOIA for this particular  
2 purpose, but we are continuing to assess our  
3 programming and initiative needs to identify some of  
4 these gaps.

5 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, so there  
6 may be funding requests in the future for this if you  
7 see that this is something that is necessary. So,  
8 for English language learning and support centers,  
9 how successful has that program been in terms of  
10 attracting new participants? And what criteria is  
being used to measure that success?

11 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, on English  
12 language learners, I want to make sure we have the  
13 right numbers for you. We had in FY26 so far 2,083  
14 unique learners and about 750 graduates. We are-  
15 through this program we've delivered 73 classes  
16 across three of the library systems reaching about  
17 1,700 unique learners and 576 graduates, and then the  
18 in-house We Speak program that MOIA runs has also  
19 delivered 23 classes across Queens, Manhattan, the  
Bronx, and Brooklyn to reach 382 unique learners and  
174 graduates.

20 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And so, the  
21 outcome and the impacts, they're being tracked by

1  
2 graduates, right? Is there any other- are there any  
3 other measures in that program that you track to  
4 signal success?

5 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. So, per quarter,  
6 we are keeping track of unique learner numbers, but  
7 we are also keeping track of regularity of  
8 attendance, certificate eligibility, all of that is  
9 really tracked to assess the neighborhood or the  
10 branch that, you know, what their needs are and the  
11 applicability of services. In addition to attendance  
12 numbers, facilitator observations, curriculum packets  
13 also include a survey, and so we get a multilingual  
14 learner survey where individuals can self report on  
15 demographic information like, you know, origin, the  
16 borough of residence, you know, time learning  
17 English, and any other feedback that they have. So,  
18 the survey is another way for us to capture that  
19 information.

20 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And is that-  
21 does that survey- because obviously there's less than  
half that have graduated that have come in. So, does  
it speak to some of the barriers that they may find  
going to the program, attending it and completing it?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah. So, to what the Commissioner laid out I think there's really three key components of the work and how we track. It's the unique learners, and the attendance and the graduate, because- and also sort of understanding how this program might be different from your- you know, more traditional adult literacy class is that this is really the first time that learners might be open to even speaking another language, and an entry point to further services. So, a key for us is also ensuring that folks are showing up and that attendance is one of the key factors that we look at as well.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: So, how do you track demand for the services? How do you identify a community or where this service should be provided?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: We're currently not tracking that, because we- the program as we know it, it's sort of new, at least one or two years, but we're certainly open to assessing that.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Do you know which organizations are contracted out for this program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: There are three library branches, New York Public Library,

1  
2 Brooklyn Public Library, and the Queens Public  
3 Library.

4 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And was there  
5 an RFP process to receive the funding for that  
6 program that they have to go through that at the  
7 libraries or were they just designated?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: No RFP  
9 process.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, and in  
11 total what was anticipated to be allocated in fiscal  
12 2027?

13 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, it's \$500,000 per  
14 library system. \$200,000 is what we started out with  
15 and then \$300,000 was added additional to that  
16 program. I don't know if you want to talk about the  
17 breakdown.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: Yeah. So,  
19 this is for FY26. For FY27, as I mentioned earlier,  
20 we did get an additional \$1.5 million that has been  
21 baselined for this program. So, for FY27 we are  
looking at about \$2.1 million baselined for English  
learning and support centers. We are still in the  
process of figuring out how all of that funding will  
be allocated. And just very briefly to go back to

1  
2 your question about the RFP, we- the libraries were  
3 designated this funding when we first launched this  
4 program because we had already had a partnership with  
5 them to provide programming. This has allowed us to  
6 have- to meet the demand for the asylum-seeker  
7 community that was asking for all of these classes to  
8 be readily available for them throughout the city.  
9 So, it did allow us as, you know, as an office to  
10 meet that demand. Again, now that we have baseline  
11 funding we are going to be evaluating all of our  
12 programs and then making an assessment, you know,  
13 short term and long term in terms of allocations.

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Yeah, I hope  
15 so, because you know, I love my libraries and I think  
16 that they're a great place to house this especially  
17 when you're trying to turn it over really quickly  
18 with the organization that you trust, that you can  
19 provide the services, but I know services like this  
20 are needed in so many different pockets of  
21 communities. It's very difficult to move around the  
city as a newcomer to the city and get access to  
resources, and so I really do hope the RFP speaks to  
that and that we can track where that need is and  
identify that so we can properly provide that

1 service. It's important. And so before I move into  
2 the next topic which will be around some of our legal  
3 support centers and Action NYC, I'm going to allow  
4 our amazing- Council Member Joseph has another  
5 question for you, a quick commercial break as we  
6 called it.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: No, it actually-  
8 it's along the lines that you were asking.

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Perfect.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Right? I know  
11 about We Speak, because I taught that program. Is  
12 there a possibility where there could be a  
13 partnership with District 79 that's already doing  
14 that work? I think that should be a conversation  
15 when we talk about interagencies. D79 does the ESL,  
16 the GED, but it serves a large immigrant community  
17 which is already embedded in the New York City Public  
18 School system.

19 COMMISSIONER ALI: Council Member, that's  
20 a great idea and something that we will definitely  
21 explore.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: See, told you,  
Chair.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: I love this. We're going to be ping-ponging all day. This is great.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: That was really good. No, of course. So, for the immigration legal support centers, we know that the Preliminary Plan includes \$11.6 million in baseline funding for legal support centers. The former Commissioner changed the program's name from Action NYC to MOIA's Immigration Legal Support Centers. Can you explain the changes in the new model, and how have they improved services?

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, I'll start and I'll kick it over to my colleague, as I'm also learning the sort of shift and change. Some of the changes, as I understand it, include adjusting really the number of contracted providers, funding levels, deliverables, target population, and the geographic reach, and so that is included- it's not just the name change. I think there was also a more holistic deliberate approach to this. I think at the heart of the redesign was the goal of embedding legal service providers within immigrant-dense neighborhoods



1  
2 alongside organizations that are equipped to really  
3 deliver immigration services in a culturally and  
4 linguistically-informed way. And so, you know, the  
5 question of, you know, whether this has- you know,  
6 what the shift was. You know, I think the shift, you  
7 know, into communities that can service and have  
8 longstanding sort of relationships is where you saw a  
9 large sort of shift in the actual programming.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And how many  
11 centers are currently open?

12 COMMISSIONER ALI: We have 29 unique  
13 providers across 38 contracts. So, there are 25  
14 Legal Support Centers that are working with a  
15 three-year contract, and then there's an additional  
16 13 that were sort of former Action NYC partners who  
17 were also given an opportunity to apply for funding  
18 in FY26.

19 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: So, will there  
20 be additional centers that possibly open under this  
21 program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: I think  
that's part of the assessment that we're working on,  
and figuring out what has been working and what  
hasn't. And if you would allow me, because I think

1 the numbers speak for themselves. But you know, the  
2 program, we still haven't hit our first birthday yet.  
3 So we're getting there, and we're working to closely  
4 assess the needs and if the model is working or not,  
5 but I just wanted to give you the number, because  
6 to-date there has been significant across the new  
7 support centers. The program has recorded 8,756  
8 screenings, and 3,727 filings through the first half  
9 of FY26 and into quarter three. If you compare this  
10 to 7,656 screenings and 4,684 filings that were done  
11 for all of FY2025. So, just to say that the  
12 providers have been going above and beyond and  
13 working, and also the demand of course to acknowledge  
14 the increase, but I just wanted to share that with  
15 you, because we found that number to be an important  
16 indicator. Of course, there's other assessments and  
17 things to that extent, but I wanted to share that  
18 number with you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: No, I  
20 appreciate that number. Can you talk about some of  
21 the other assessments? I know that there's a lot of  
assessing going on at this time. So,--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: [interposing]  
[inaudible].

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: What are some of those things that you're looking at?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah. I mean, we have direct communications with our providers and we are about to start and roll out our quarter three convos [sic] with them. Parts of the conversations are whether or not, you know, we're on track to meet deliverables, but also if there are additional services that they want to provide, additional needs that they're seeing on the ground, things like that as we're sort of doing this massive look under the hood with all our programs at MOIA.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And kicking the tires, too, I'm assuming, right? So, the Council has provided MOIA with \$850,000 to cover fees for applications and other operational expenses for MOIA-funded legal providers. Can you provide us a status on how that funding is being used?

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, that particular funding was allocated across 27 providers. 24 of them have this funding already reflected in their FY26 budgets and providers are- did they put you on the clock? Oh, my goodness. Providers are also submitting updated budgets to be able to invoice and

1  
2 to pass for. There are three providers out of the 27  
3 that have contract amendments that are in progress  
4 with our contracting agency, DSS, to add to this  
5 funding. I don't know if there's anything more, Jas,  
6 that you wanted to add to that.

7  
8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: Well, very  
9 quickly, in total actually that- the total amount  
10 that went over to those filing fees was about \$1  
11 million. We use the \$850,000 as well as about \$172  
12 million that was left over from the \$4.4 million that  
13 was provided by the Council for legal services. So,  
14 we make sure that we utilize that funding to be able  
15 to provide this much needed support to more  
16 providers.

17 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, great.  
18 And so for the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative,  
19 the Preliminary Plan includes \$2.2 million in fiscal  
20 26 for the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative  
21 program. I know we've spoken a lot about this, but  
22 are there specific immigrant populations that are  
23 facing more challenges than others that were reported  
24 by the collaborative, and if so, how are you  
25 supporting them and prioritizing?

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, we touched a little bit on this earlier with folks who have lost TPS, but there are several populations that are facing a number of challenges including those who have lost TPS or whose status is really in limbo. Those are the key populations that we are currently focused on. There are undocumented individuals more broadly are facing increased fear and uncertainty because of the intensified federal enforcement. So that we know, as Chair you've mentioned, has had a chilling effect on their willingness to access city services. So we're focused on undocumented individuals as well. And then we're also seeing a significant need as we talk to our contracted providers amongst unaccompanied minors and mixed-status families who are navigating this federal- very hostile federal landscape.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: So, in terms of the Immigration Legal Support Hotline, the budget also allocated for legal support it includes \$632,000 roughly in fiscal 2026. How many people currently staff the hotline?

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, the hotline employs seven full-time counselors. The counselors at

the hotline speak English, French, Haitian-Creole, Spanish, Urdu.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And what are the hours of operation? You said it was-

COMMISSIONER ALI: So, they've been expanded beyond our typical Monday through Friday, nine to five. So the expanded hours right now Monday and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Tuesday, Thursday, Friday from 9:00 to 6:00. The last Saturday of the month has been added and is- the hotline is available from 9:00 to 5:00.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: So, as we know, you know, part of the defense here with imminent deportation is that people may need to get to somebody really quickly. So, what should someone do outside of those operating hours?

COMMISSIONER ALI: I think directly with providers, they should be engaging with them. I mean, we're currently providing, you know, materials and listing that is available to both the providers and connecting individuals both about NYFUP and the RLC, and that information is in fact available in top 10 languages. If a caller calls the hotline during operating hours, we know that they're going to be

1 directed to staff, and if they call- I think there's  
2 an option, if I'm correct- staff can correct me.  
3 There is an option for folks who call outside of  
4 operating hours to leave a message and have their  
5 call be returned.

6 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Are they  
7 connected in any way outside of operating hours?  
8 Like, press one to be connected to?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah, to add  
10 to what the Commissioner said, after hours they're  
11 just asked to call back during the normal operating  
12 hours. But it's an issue that we're going to bring  
13 back, because I know there were flags about  
14 after-hour services. It's something that we are  
15 looking into. When a caller dials in- I'm going to  
16 try to get it right- they are prompted to IVR system  
17 which asks them like what language they want to  
18 choose. Right now, we have Spanish, English,  
19 Haitian-Creole, and I think one more, and we're  
20 working on rolling out additional languages by the  
21 end of the spring.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Yeah we have, I  
believe, 800 different languages that we speak in  
this city, and so we really are always going to push

for more language access and having that information on that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: If you would allow me, Chair?

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Go ahead, yes, please.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Besides the hotline operators that we have that speaks the number of languages that the Commissioner laid out, operators also have access to Language Line which opens up the many additional languages that might be needed depending on who calls.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And you said there were seven now. How many were last- were there last year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: I can circle back with that number. I don't have it handy.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. So, how do you anticipate that the demand will change in the coming year, and can the level of funding that is put there adequately support those needs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Well, we hope that individuals keep calling the hotline to receive services. That's always a hope for us. In



1  
2 regards to additional assessments for future funding  
3 needs, that's part of the larger work that we're  
4 currently doing across our programs.

5 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Alrighty [sic].  
6 We're getting through a lot, so thank you all for  
7 getting through this with me. I know it seems like  
8 there's a lot here, but ultimately what we're trying  
9 to get to is that makes sure that you have all of the  
10 resources that you need to do this important work.  
11 We're seeing it on the ground from our constituents,  
12 and we want to make sure that when we're fighting for  
13 this budget that we make sure you have everything  
14 that you need covered, but I know that there has  
15 been- for example, for the asylum-seeker legal  
16 services that there was funding that was cut for  
17 ASLAN [sic] in fiscal 26 and for fiscal 26 only. The  
18 City Council restored it for \$5 million. Can you  
19 explain a little bit about why that funding was cut?

20 COMMISSIONER ALI: So, I'll start and my  
21 team can fill in some of the blanks. My  
understanding is that the funding for ASLAN and the  
navigation centers was actually consolidated into  
MOIA's Legal Support Centers funding.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: And to be more specific, that funding was repurposed to allow- to provide the one-year extension to the former Action NYC providers that currently have a one-year contract with us for FY26.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: So, that's part of the \$7.6 million for fiscal 2026?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: Correct. So, in order for us to be able to continue this one-year contract for those 13 providers in FY26, we utilize the- we repurpose the ASLAN and also navigation center's funding as well as the \$4.4 million allocated by the Council. That has allowed us to provide those one-year contracts for this fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, alright. This is what I mean about having to shift and move, and move there. So, I want to get into Local Law 73. You know, as you know, it was meant to develop a survey of newly-arrived immigrants, especially those who have arrived recently. Can you provide an update on the survey development and the administration? Just on the survey development first, and then we'll get to the rest.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah, Chair, and I think it's like- it was a pairing between 73 and 74 if I'm not mistaken. Currently, the DOHMH is in charge of administering said survey. MOIA has supported them, has consulted with them, but DOHMH would have sort of the latest on where things are.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: And are we able to obtain the surveys to know what kind of questions were included in those surveys?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: We're happy to circle back just because we're not the authors of them, but we can check with our colleagues.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. And do you know how many asylum-seekers or migrants were involved in each survey?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: We don't have that number now because the survey is actively being done. So we wouldn't have access to that data right now.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. And has there been any issues with carrying out that law, creating that survey? Any barriers that you've seen for that agency?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Again, like we'll touch base with them, but I would say to you that I know that part of what we were also working on is that people were moving, things to that extent, but we can have a better, more concrete response to you once we touch base with our colleagues.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, we'll be circling back on that. And the Preliminary Plan also includes \$16.9 million for the IOI Deportation Defense initiative. What is the projected budget for the IOI Deportation Initiative for fiscal year 27?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: We are going to have to confirm that for you. That program is actually managed by DSS, so we don't have oversight of that particular program.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay. So, I'll hold for that, but just so that you know what I'm asking, it's both for the projected budget for IOI Deportation Defense and also for the IOI Immigration Opportunity Initiative for fiscal- both for fiscal 27.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: We'll follow up.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. It was also announced that the Department of Small Business Services is creating a new Office of Vendor Services as required by City Council bill- sorry- that passed last year. The Office of Vendor Services will be tasked with supporting the city's estimated 23,000 street vendors, nearly all of whom are immigrants. Is MOIA planning to work closely with this office as nearly all street vendors are immigrants?

COMMISSIONER ALI: We're very excited to hear of this announcement, are very much looking forward to teaming up and working closely with the Department of Vendor Services.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Do you know if language capacity will be available for this office? Do you know?

COMMISSIONER ALI: I actually don't. We can follow up.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, because I know that the needs of delivery workers, street vendors, you know, they're at the forefront of the Council's agenda. As you know, we have some really strong champions in the council, and so we want to

1  
2 understand- can you describe how you partner to  
3 support coalitions of delivery workers, street  
4 vendors, small businesses?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah, I  
6 think part of what we're also excited about is that  
7 we're under this new portfolio with Deputy Mayor Su,  
8 and we're looking forward to building more robust  
9 relationships across agencies, but also with  
10 organizations. I would say that we have been in  
11 touch with the deliveristas in the past, particularly  
12 when issues connected to legal issues came up, and we  
13 have been in touch with them. But as the  
14 Commissioner said, there's more intentionality that  
15 we are hoping to move forward with especially with  
16 the new offices and the office that was created with-  
17 the Street Vendor Project in particular.

18 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: I am excited as  
19 well, as well as most of the champions and the City  
20 Council. We'll be tracking this, and we're looking  
21 forward to, you know, continuing this work and having  
you back to ask specific questions around small  
businesses and how we support them, as well as a  
number of other topics that we'll be working, much  
like you, in collaboration with my council- my other

1 council team in terms of committees. So, there'll be  
2 some of that happening in the near future. For now I  
3 want to thank you for your time and your testimony.  
4 We are going to be moving into the public comment  
5 section. We don't have anyone else here. There's no  
6 one online, Council Members. So, we will be taking a  
7 short break for those of you so I can move my feet  
8 around, and thank you so much, Commissioner. It'll be  
9 about five to 10 minutes.

10 COMMISSIONER ALI: Chair, we want to  
11 thank you and your team as well.

12 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.  
13 [break]

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet down. Can  
15 everyone get their seats? We're about to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you so  
17 much for coming back. We are now going to ask our  
18 invited guests, former Speaker of the New York City  
19 Council, Melissa Mark-Viverito, to give testimony at  
20 today's hearing. That's right. Alright, don't-  
21 let's do the thing. Let's do the thing. When you're  
ready, just press the button and go.

MELISSA MARK-VIVERITO: Okay. Alright,  
well good afternoon. Buenos tardes to everybody. It

really is wild to be here. I've not been in this building since I left office, and it's wonderful to see the upgrades and everything. And to everybody that's in this room, all the advocates that do the work each and every day on behalf of our immigrant communities, I commend you all for the work and for being here. It was a pleasure when I was in office to be able to work side by side with many of you. So, good afternoon to the Chairwoman of this committee who happens to be my Councilwoman, Elsie Encarnacion. You know, we all know that- the dark times that we are living in. There's a national siege on immigrant families and the communities we're a part of, and it's upon us. This moment demands more from us. New York and other cities must stand strong for the human rights and values at the core of our local policies. This city does not buckle under pressure. We act. Our upcoming budget negotiations are a critical opportunity to aggressively meet these dangerous times, including by bolstering offices and services on the front lines of work and leadership. ICE and Border Patrol agents masked and dressed in full combat gear have flooded cities across the country and now our airports. These agents have become the



1 foot soldiers of a cruel, authoritarian regime,  
2 unleashing indiscriminate violence against anyone  
3 they perceive as other, citizen and non-citizen  
4 alike. Sadly, it is crystal clear to agents that  
5 they will not be held accountable for their actions,  
6 even in the most egregious of cases. In fact, the  
7 White House routinely posts memes and AI-generated  
8 videos that celebrate ICE and Border Patrol's cruelty  
9 and advance not so thinly-veiled white supremacist  
10 propaganda. There's no denying that a year and a  
11 half into Trump's second term, his administration is  
12 unapologetic and scapegoating non-white people,  
13 flouting due process, increasing surveillance, all  
14 while lining the pockets of the president's cronies  
15 in the most corrupt administration ever. New York  
16 City has grown, become stronger over time and thrives  
17 thanks to the contributions of immigrants, and its  
18 rich diversity attracts millions of visitors and  
19 dollars to the city each year, providing more to our  
20 local economy than what they receive in any type of  
21 services, despite what ignorant critics may spew. In  
recognition of this sanctuary, protections have been  
embedded into the fabric of our city. Since the 1980s  
both Republican and Democratic mayors have recognized

that communities are safer when immigrants do not fear reporting crime to the police. Similarly, communities are healthier when all who reside within it can access health care and financially sound when there are diverse job opportunities and strong worker protections. With over 3 million immigrants calling New York City home and many more living in mixed-status households, the city must ensure immigrants feel safe accessing city services. The Council has an exemplary record of taking strong legislative action to protect their rights and ensure that city agencies and law enforcement can focus on their prior duty, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our city. To that end, the Council under the leadership of this previous Council Speaker passed legislation that prohibits local law enforcement from entering into 287G agreements which would allow them to cooperate with ICE on civil immigration enforcement. Additional laws ensure that city resources and time are not used in support of federal immigration enforcement, including by prohibiting ICE access to Rikers Island. We also passed detainer laws that protect the immigrants due process rights, by ensuring that the NYPD, Department of Correction,

and Department of Probation only honor detainer requests when they are accompanied by judicial warrant, and we set a national standard by investing millions to fund legal and other services that provided critical safety net, one which only has expanded since then thanks to the leadership of our New York City Council. As our federal elected representatives attempt to reign in ICE and Border Patrol's most egregious behavior through funding negotiations and cities around the country passed laws similar to those we've had on the books for years, New York City must continue to be a national leader in partnership with New York State. At the state level, I want to commend Senator Gounardes and Assemblywoman Reyes, prime sponsors of the New York for All Act, and hope to see this legislation passed as part of the current state budget negotiations. This will permanently bring New York State more in line with our city sanctuary laws and offer critical protections to millions of New Yorkers. Here in NYC, our wonderful New York City, with a City Council that is new and mayor at the helm, we must continue to fight federal overreach and hate while advancing policies and initiatives that enhance our

longstanding efforts to promote the inclusion, protection, and celebration of immigrant New Yorkers. But today, many of the programs intended to support immigrant New Yorkers exist across multiple agencies, creating a patchwork system that can be difficult to track, coordinate and strengthen. This fragmentation makes it harder to ensure accountability, maintain a cohesive strategy and quickly respond to the evolving needs of our communities. So to meet this moment with the urgency it demands, something that many advocates have been advocating for over the years, we should really take the next step and consider establishing a standalone immigration agency, one that can bring together the various contracts, initiatives that are currently spread across these agencies, ensuring that work is coordinated, nimble, strategic, and fully aligned with the values we have long upheld. So at a time when immigrant communities are being targeted and tested at every level, our response must be equally intentional. Obviously, as part of that demand is also the fact that all the services that are currently financed and funded should not see a dollar withheld. If anything, an understanding we have difficult times, we should see

1 an expansion of possible- of some of those critical  
2 services. I'm sure many of which you'll hear from the  
3 advocates today, but I think that having this  
4 comprehensive and city agency, and the weight that  
5 that comes and brings with it is really imperative,  
6 again, so that the agency could be nimble and deal  
7 with what is to come. We know that New York City is  
8 going to be on the front lines of that. So, we- at a  
9 time when immigrant communities are being targeted  
10 and tested at every level, our response must be  
11 equally intentional. We have led before and we must  
12 continue to lead now not only by defending our  
13 policies, but by strengthening the systems that make  
14 them real in people's lives. So, gracias [speaking  
Spanish]. Thank you for inviting me here today, and  
I appreciate the opportunity.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. And  
16 thank you for coming, obviously. Yes, we got to-  
17 obviously, you know, for those of you who don't know,  
18 I served under Council Member- when she was Council  
19 Member, not as Speaker, for six years. And so you do  
20 this work day in and day out from the day you stepped  
21 into office to the day I left your office. I'm proud  
to be here as one of your- one of the people that

you've really grown into this space, and I hope that I make you proud in the work that I do here today, and that I carry on. So, all of you will be witness that is, you know, mentorship. This is what happens when you really do the work, not just, you know, for the whole city, but you really look at your community and you look at people that can really take on the work and champion it moving forward, because the work never stops, and we need good people at the forefront. So, thank you so much for that, and [inaudible]

MELISSA MARK-VIVERITO: [interposing] The last- I just want to say to the people in this room it is the work that you do that has- gives us the ability to be successful in the work that we accomplish, right? The detainer laws that we talk about that we have in the City of New York, the getting ICE out of Rikers, that only came out of the advocacy that some of the groups when they met with me said this is happening in our city, we need to respond. So, please, I know the times are tough and things get difficult, but the work that you do does make a difference and it impacts people's lives. So thank you for that.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. I will now open the hearing for public testimony. I remind members of the public that this is a government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times. We all talked about our hands. The witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table. Further, members of the public may not present audio or video recordings as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the sergeant at arms for inclusion in the hearing record. If you wish to speak today at today's hearing, please fill out one of these appearance cards with the Sergeant at Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will have two minutes to speak on today's topic, the Committee on Immigration's Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Budget hearing. If you have a written statement or additional written testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to our Sergeant at Arms. You may also email written testimony to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov) within 72 hours of the

close of this hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be accepted. For in-person panelists, please come up to the table once your name has been called. Now I will call our first in-person panel. Please come up Samara Dua [sp?] from CUNY City Tech, Monique Francis from CUNY Citizenship Now, Ramon Espinal from CUNY City Tech, Miriam Samoy [sp?]- I'm so sorry- CUNY New York City College of Technology, Amara Malik [sp?] from City Tech, and Kahlid Usman [sp?] from City Tech. You guys- if you guys are in the room, you can come up to the front. We may be waiting because we have an overflow room, so we will be waiting for them to walk over. With that in mind, I'm going to give the names for the second panel. So, if you're in the other room, you can start making your way this way. The second panel will consist of Catherine Gonzales [sp?], Carla Aswala [sp?], and Deborah Lee [sp?]. So, those are the second panelists. Here they come. Hi, everyone. I want to keep in mind that when your mic has the green light, that mic is on, so you know that that mic is on. You can press the button to put the mic on and off as you move around. You may begin.



MONIQUE FRANCIS: Thank you, Chairperson Encarnacion and the honorable members of the Immigration Committee, and the Council finance team. I can't live without. My name is Monique Francis, the newly appointed Executive Director at CUNY Citizenship Now. I'm here on behalf of the dedicated team of 58 City Council-funded staff and more than 400 active volunteers. In this time of escalating need, Citizenship Now has remained steadfast in our commitment to serving immigrant New Yorkers. Since starting in 2010, funding from the City Council has supported more than 80,000 individuals all on the path to citizenship. This includes in district one-and-one consultations, monthly community application assistance events, and most recently our virtual consultation series. For these New Yorkers, our services are free and are a vital lifeline. This helps them to remain in the United States while building a more stable future in the city they call home. This fiscal year alone our organization received more than 30,000 calls. In response we prioritize general inquiries to attorneys through our contact center hotline. More than 3,000 of those calls resulted in consultations and completed

1 applications. We respectfully urge the council to  
2 sustain its support for programs in the FY2027 fiscal  
3 year budget. We request the renewal of the \$4.6  
4 million allocation and for our ASLAN supplemental  
5 asylum services, we request continued funding of  
6 \$845,951. CUNY Citizenship Now is making measurable  
7 difference in empowering immigrant New Yorkers. On  
8 May 16th we will hold our signature spring  
9 citizenship drive at John Jay College, a partnership  
10 with state and city agencies, nonprofit organization,  
11 and corporate law firms with a goal of helping 300  
12 permanent residents complete their citizenship  
13 application. We ask that you show your support by  
14 showing up. Thank you for continued partnership. I  
15 welcome any questions.

14 SAMIRA: Good afternoon, everyone. Good  
15 afternoon, Chair Encarnacion. My name is Samira and  
16 I'm from Morocco. Firstly, I would like to say thank  
17 you. Thank you for giving me the chance to talk to  
18 you today, and I'm so glad to share my gratitude to  
19 City Tech Adult Learning Center and for the City  
20 Council Members. As once said, one teacher, one  
21 book, and one pencil can change the world which means  
that education is a power tool to change lives. As

many immigrants, including myself, the hardest part of starting a new life is the language. Language is truly a bridge to integration. As a mother, not being able to communicate made it hard for me to support my children in some things like reading, helping with homework, connecting with teachers, and getting more involved in school projects. I have experience that feeling when I know what to do, but I do not have the right words. Feeling frustrated and unable to help is what motivate me- motivates me to work on my language and improve it. Once I started learning English, everything began to change. I became more confident in communication by overcoming the language barrier and was able to support my children towards success. I'm glad today to say that City Tech Learning Center made this possible for me and for many immigrants who cannot afford English classes in private institutions. Without this program, immigrants might lose the chance to be included and connected to their communities. On behalf of all my classmates, I would like to say thank you City Tech Adult Learning Center for offering this program. Thank you City Hall for funding and support units. You are not just helping

1  
2 with money, you are opening wide doors for immigrants  
3 to a brighter future. Thank you all for your  
4 attention.

5 KALUD: Good afternoon, everyone. My  
6 name is Kalud [sp?], and today I want to share my  
7 experience learning English. I came to America in  
8 2001 with my husband and my daughter from Syria.  
9 When I first arrived, I did not know how to speak  
10 English. Simple things like talking to others or  
11 asking for help felt very difficult. One of the  
12 biggest challenge for me was helping my daughter with  
13 her homework and speaking with her teachers. I  
14 wanted to support her, but I often felt upset,  
15 because I could not fully understand or express  
16 myself. Over the years, I had four more children. I  
17 learned very basic English by listening and trying my  
18 best in everyday situation, but I never really had  
19 the time to focus on my learning- the English  
20 correctly because I was busy raising my family. Now  
21 that my children are older, some in college and some  
in middle school, I finally felt more [inaudible] to  
learn English. I want to be more independent and  
understand everything around me. I was referred to  
this program by my friend Miriam [sp?] and decide to

1 sign up. I hope this will help me improve my English  
2 and enjoy it even more than I ever imagined. Through  
3 this program, I have learned so much. I have become  
4 more confident speaking with other without needing  
5 translation. I have also learned how to speak in  
6 public which is something I could not have imagined  
7 doing years ago. In this future, I hope to get my GED  
8 and become a medical assistant. I want to thank you  
9 for listening to us. We ask for your strong support  
10 for this program because it thoroughly deserves it.  
Thank you.

11 RAMON ESPINAL: Good afternoon, member of  
12 this committee and ladies and gentlemen. My name is  
13 Ramon Epsinal and it is an honor and a privilege for  
14 me to be here at this Immigration Committee hearing,  
15 along with all those who like me have come with a  
16 single purpose to advocate for our education. To  
17 begin, I want to thank the New York City College of  
18 Technology Adult Learning Center for granting me the  
19 opportunity to be here and all you for your  
20 invitation. My request today is to ask Councilwoman  
21 Crystal Hudson, representing District 35 which  
include my community of Fort Greene and surrounding  
area, and all her colleagues to advocate for better

1 education. We need more resources invest in all  
2 education programs at the school and university so  
3 that other like me can see their dream come true  
4 someday. And I personally, I believe that every New  
5 Yorker has the right to better education program. And  
6 I want to remind you guys that you didn't elect us,  
7 we elected you to represent us. This is why I'm  
8 begging you to help us, to support us, right, in our  
9 education [inaudible] experience. Thank you very  
10 much. Thank you New York City, and God bless  
11 America.

12 AMA MALAK: Good afternoon everyone. My  
13 name is Ama Malak [sp?] and I'm one of many  
14 immigrants who has had the privilege of attending the  
15 ESL program at City Tech. I arrived in the United  
16 States one year ago from France. Today, I'm in my  
17 third semester, and I stand before to share with you  
18 why this program means so much to me. When I first  
19 come here, I felt lost. The language barrier was not  
20 just a challenge, it was isolating. I struggled to  
21 communicate, to express myself and to find my place.  
Then I joined the ESL program at City Tech and  
everything started to change. Step-by-step I gained  
confidence in speaking English and with that

1 confidence came new opportunities. Recently I  
2 started interviewing for jobs, something I could not  
3 have imagined when I first arrived. That is the true  
4 power of this program. It does not just teach  
5 English, it empowers people. It restores confidence.  
6 It opens doors and give us the ability to build a  
7 future and contribute to this country. For every  
8 dollar invested in this program, you are investing in  
9 someone's future. Please continue to support and fund  
10 City Tech ESL programs because there are not just  
11 [inaudible] lives, they are building them. Thank  
12 you.

13 MIRIAM: Hello everyone. My name is  
14 Miriam [sic] [inaudible]. I have three years here in  
15 New York City. In the first, I want to thank City  
16 Hall for this opportunity, and I want to thank City  
17 Tech New York College of Technology [inaudible] for  
18 her support. When I come to United States I can't  
19 speak or understand any word in English. Life, it was  
20 hard, but [inaudible] education help me to change my  
21 life. I learned English step-by-step, and I become  
more confident and independent. At that time, I  
start looking for something to practice my English.  
So I start working volunteer work with the City Tech

1 to translate- to help students and translate for them  
2 from Arabic [inaudible] to English to help register  
3 there. Later I start with my friends to create small  
4 platform like Zoom to make conversations [inaudible]  
5 to practice more. We start like three students and  
6 now it's become more than 100. So, today, I am a  
7 student in City Tech and I work part time with this  
8 program. My goal is to continue improving my English  
9 and help more immigrants succeed. So, [inaudible]  
10 education made all this possible. That is why we  
11 [inaudible] ask you to support this program with  
12 funding so it can continue and welcome even more  
13 immigrants when need this opportunity. Thank you so  
14 much.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: I want to thank  
16 each and every one of you. Did an amazing job. I'm  
17 very proud of you. You are really stellar examples of  
18 what that program has done. So thank you so much.  
19 And I have some questions for CUNY Citizenship Now.  
20 And you've also all did it before the time ran out.  
21 So you should all be an example for everybody that  
comes after you. So, great job being that first  
panel to do that. So, for CUNY Citizenship Now, have



you been able to serve all of the people who have requested service through your program?

MONIQUE FRANCIS: Yes. So, anyone who calls us or requests a call back online or texts us gets an appointment within two weeks.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Within two weeks.

MONIQUE FRANCIS: And we call them back within 24 to 48 hours.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, good. And is the current funding level for CUNY Citizenship Now adequate to address the communities you feel?

MONIQUE FRANCIS: Yes. So, we got an increase last year of an additional \$1.6 million, yes.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, perfect. Well, that was it. That was easy-peasy right? Take it easy on you. Thank you so much, and I'll be calling up the next panel. Just to remind the next panel. It is Catherine Gonzalez, Carla Ostolaza- I'm sorry, I missed- Ostolaza, and Deborah Lee from the Legal Aid Society. The following panel which will be panel three, we have Sierra Kraft, Allison Cutler, Tania Mattos, Rachel Jordan, Janet Miller, and Kelly

Barajas. That is for the third panel. Just want to make sure you know so when you're ready to come in. Okay, you may begin.

CATHERINE GONZALEZ: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion and members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for the Council's consideration of our renewal request for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, or NYIFUP. My name is Catherine Gonzalez. I am Associate General Counsel at Brooklyn Defender Services. Alongside the Bronx Defenders and Legal Aid Society, we serve as the city's defender organizations providing free legal representation to detained immigrants through the NYIFUP program. For more than a decade, NYIFUP has been a national model for providing high-quality representation for immigrants in detained removal proceedings who cannot afford counsel. Thank you to City Council funding, New Yorkers facing deportation have had a lawyer by their side. While we have weathered enforcement surges before, what we are seeing now is without precedent. Since our last testimony in 2025, arrests have rapidly increased by ICE and new detention facilities have opened across the northeast and the

country. ICE is transferring New Yorkers within hours, often out of state, and sometimes thousands of miles away. We are currently representing New Yorkers detained in at least 15 states because they've been moved. For the people we serve, detention is existential loss of liberty, separation from family, and the very real risk of deportation to life-threatening conditions or countries where they have no ties or support. These enforcement tactics are designed to sever community ties and undermine due process. NYIFUP's integration within public defender offices allows us to quickly act in an increasingly volatile system. NYIFUP is responding in real-time, conducting urgent interviews late at night or early in the morning, filing last-minute motions and preserving life-savings claims that might otherwise be lost without a hearing. We're also expanding litigation in federal courts to secure clients released through habeas petitions in-house and to vindicate their fundamental rights by pursuing critical appeals in the federal circuit courts. No New Yorker should face deportation alone, and we urge the Council to continue and deepen its commitment to NYIFUP in this new and brutal enforcement landscape.

Thank you for your continued commitment to protecting immigrant New Yorkers.

KARLA OSTOLAZA: Hi, good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion, and members of the Committee. My name is Karla Ostolaza. I'm the Managing Director of the Immigration Practice at the Bronx Defenders.

You've heard from my colleague the reality in which this work takes place right now. I want to focus on what your investment has made possible, despite the challenges. Your support has allowed us to grow, adopt, and meet community needs in ways that were simply not possible before. When the Trump administration began, our team must carry more than a thousand pending cases for clients we had fought to free from detention, people now at risk of being detained again. Thanks to the Council's increased funding, we expanded our capacity to take on an extraordinary influx of new clients while still providing excellent clients under representation to prevent re-detention. Your investment also enable us to adapt to our rapidly changing detention landscape. One of the most significant shifts has been transforming NYIFUP from a purely court-based model into a hybrid system that includes both [inaudible]

street intake and community-based referrals. Since launching our public referral form in August of last year, we have received more than a thousand direct referrals from families, teachers, hospitals, social workers and community organizations to name a few. Because ICE now transfers New Yorkers all over the country, our work must follow them. At any moment we are representing people held in facilities across roughly 15 states. Your support ensures that our clients are not abandoned simply because they are removed far from home. We have also expanded our impacts with partnerships. Our Habeas pro bono project has trained attorneys from eight major law firms, resulting in more than 20 petitions filed so far. Every adjudicated case has been successful. We've also provided technical assistance to advocate across the city who are engaging in detained work for the first time. We are deeply grateful for your support. It has allowed us not only to respond to crisis, but to be a lot stronger, more resilient system for immigrant New Yorkers. I'll now turn it over to my colleague who will speak about how we plan to continue expanding our reach so that no New Yorker ever has to face deportation alone. Thank you.

DEBORAH LEE: My name is Deborah Lee and I'm the attorney in charge of the Immigration Law Unit at the Legal Aid Society. Thank you, Chair Encarnacion, for this opportunity and this committee for its continued support and partnership. The immigration landscape today, as we have heard, is more chaotic and demanding than at any point in recent memory. Since January 2025, our teams have had to track more than 600 immigration policy actions and over 50 new precedent decisions, each narrowing relief and increasing the complexity of every case we handle. Inside the courts, instability is escalating. Immigration judges are being reassigned at unprecedented rates, leading to inconsistent and hostile adjudication. Hearings are being cancelled with little notice and our clients are at constant risk of ICE detention. All this means that defending immigrants today increasingly requires not only Immigration Court advocacy, but also urgent habeas litigation, petitions for review and Federal Court interventions. This moment requires decisive city support. As the Bronx Defenders and Brooklyn Defender Services have testified, NYIFUP providers are the experts in defending these New Yorkers, people at

1 imminent risk of being removed from the United States  
2 and are likely forever separated from their families.  
3 We are best positioned to protect these vulnerable  
4 New Yorkers. To meet the need, we respectfully  
5 request increased support from the City Council for  
6 NYIFUP in the amount of \$13.299 million for each  
7 provider. Despite all this, we remain hopeful. We  
8 continue strengthening our partnerships with pro bono  
9 law firms, law schools, and each NYIFUP provider is  
10 offering a new class of law graduates this fall. All  
11 these partners are joining us because they understand  
12 what is at stake for New Yorkers. Separately, LAS,  
13 Legal Aid, is respectfully requesting \$4.5 million  
14 for the unaccompanied minors and families initiative,  
15 \$1.75 million for the Protecting New Yorkers Habeas  
16 Initiative, and \$580,596 to sustain our low-wage  
17 worker initiative. With the Council's partnership we  
18 can protect New Yorkers and defend due process.  
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. And  
21 I just wanted to ask you really quickly, you said  
\$13.299 million for each of the providers, and that's  
an increase from what?

KARLA OSTOLAZA: Last year's award was \$8.299, [inaudible] per organization.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Per organization, alright, thank you.

DEBORAH LEE: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. So, our third panel consists of Sierra Kraft [sp?] from ICARE Coalition, Addison Cutler, Tania Mattos from Unlocal, Rachel Jordan, Safe Passage Project, Janet Miller, and Kelly Barajas. And our fourth panel for those of you who may be outside of the room, if you could start making your way this way is Desiree Hernandez-Sanchez, Bethany Dill, Aracelis Lucero, Christina Garrity [sp?], Raluca- oh, can't say that last name- Oncioiu, and Chad Born. That is for the fourth panel. Great. Alright, you may begin on this side, please? Or you want them to begin on this side? Sure.

TANIA MATTOS: Okay. Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion and members of the Immigration Committee. My name is Tania Mattos and I am the Executive Director of Unlocal, an immigration nonprofit dedicated to serving New York's immigrant communities through immigration legal services and



community education. Our team of lawyers, advocates, organizers, and social workers provide free services to immigrants across the five boroughs, including Know Your Rights and deportation defense workshops, New York City Dream Act application support, and workforce development support, as well as direct legal representation. Through programs including our Pro Se Plus project that is housed under the ASLAN network, the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, and Queer Immigrant Justice Project and our general practice, we take a holistic and [inaudible] detention approach to the immigration legal services work that we do. We not only represent clients in proceedings, we equip communities with the tools and emergency preparedness and resources they need to respond safely and effectively when federal immigration enforcements comes to their door. As ICE actively intensifies in our streets and our airports, the demand for these services has not been greater. I'm going to skip forward. Beyond legal representation, the RLC trains legal practitioners on cutting edge immigration strategies, strengthens the entire legal services field and also provides rapid response social work services, offering direct

1 support and counseling to individuals facing  
2 deportations and the families they leave behind.  
3 What I urge the Council to provide is maintain  
4 funding for the rapid response legal collaborative  
5 services and commit to multi-year stable funding so  
6 providers can plan and serve clients reliably. And  
7 I'd like to share a very quick story of a father of-  
8 family of four who unfortunately father was- his  
9 limbs were lost in an accident, but we were able to  
10 provide rapid response legal services so they can  
11 focus on the emergency care that they needed and not  
12 focus on their removal orders, and that's just one  
13 quick story I wanted to share.

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

15 ALLISON CUTLER: Good afternoon, Chair  
16 Encarnacion, Council Members and staff. My name is  
17 Allison Cutler and I'm a supervising attorney in the  
18 Immigrant Protection Unit at the New York Legal  
19 Assistance Group. Thank you for the opportunity to  
20 testify today on the Preliminary Budget for fiscal  
21 year 2027. I supervise the Pro Se Plus project which  
has evolved from pro se application assistance to  
in-court advocacy for families facing the harshest  
aspects of immigration enforcement. My team is

regularly at 26 Federal Plaza helping individuals who are there for routine check-ins and court hearings, providing safety planning, appearing in front of court, intervening when appropriate while individuals are being wrongly detained, notifying families, and connecting them to vital post-detention support.

NYLAG is grateful for the city and Council's continued commitment to New York City's immigrant communities. Today, we find ourselves in a terrifying moment. Our immigrant neighbors are being torn from their homes, families, and lives.

Longstanding pathways to relief have ended, and enforcement is intensifying. These rapid changes underscore the need for increased flexible multi-year funding that allows providers to be innovative in our response. New York City legal service providers have a long history of meeting the moment with innovation, working with the city to create programs like ICARE, the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, and Pro Se Plus project. Today, I'm testifying to ask the city to double-down on your commitment to our immigrant communities through expanded and flexible funding for immigration legal services. This includes sustained and increased funding for ASLAN and the Pro Se Plus

1 project, the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative which  
2 supports detained immigrants who do not qualify for  
3 NYFIUP, and also the legal support center model which  
4 has impacted our ability to continue to maintain  
5 services in partnerships with hospitals and other  
6 culturally-specific CBOs and we are grateful that we  
7 currently have one year LSE funding to continue  
8 providing services. We are so appreciative for your  
9 support, partnership and advocacy. Thank you.

10 SIERRA KRAFT: Good afternoon, Chair  
11 Encarnacion, members of the Immigration Committee and  
12 the finance team. Thank you for the opportunity to  
13 testify. My name is Sierra Kraft and I'm the  
14 Executive Director of the ICARE coalition. We're  
15 dedicated to ensuring unaccompanied immigrant  
16 children in New York City have access to free legal  
17 representation. I want to thank you for the council's  
18 leadership for your significant investment in  
19 immigrant youth through the unaccompanied minors and  
20 families initiative, and the Special Immigrant  
21 Juvenile Status initiative in fiscal year 26. This  
funding has been the only thing standing between  
thousands of children and a return to violence and  
trauma they fled. Because of you, New York is a

national model for immigrant youth, but that progress is at risk. While we sit here, legal protections are being stripped away at the federal level and due process undermined in our court rooms. More children are being detained and their cases are being fast-tracked in a court without them even understanding what's happening to them. What we're witnessing is a systemic attempt to make these children invisible. Without a lawyer, a child has about a 15 percent chance of staying in this country and with an ICARE attorney, that rises to over 90 percent. But legal representation does not happen in a vacuum. It requires infrastructure. ICARE serves as the coordination hub of this work, providing screening, tracking data, and support to allow 13 provider organizations to function as one unified system. This infrastructure is what makes representation possible. From July to February, we've received over 800 applications for youth in seeking legal support. We've been able to match over 300 youth with providers and identify over 200 duplicates, saving hundreds of attorney hours. At the same time, federal funding has become increasingly unstable, leaving providers to manage

1 more urgent and complex cases with fewer resources.  
2 When funding becomes unpredictable, services  
3 disappear, and children are left to navigate the  
4 system alone. The threat here is instability. This  
5 network only works if it's sustained, and without  
6 your continued investment, we're not just facing a  
7 budget gap, we're looking at a deportation pipeline  
8 for children who qualify for protection, but cannot  
9 access it. So, we respectfully request the Council  
10 to sustain the \$18.6 million investment for the  
11 unaccompanied minors and families incident and  
12 maintain this SIJ initiative at \$2.5 million. Thank  
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

15 RACHEL JORDAN: Thank you to Chair  
16 Encarnacion, the other members of the Committee, for  
17 the opportunity to testify today. My name is Rachel  
18 Jordan. I'm the managing attorney for Partnership and  
19 Advocacy at Safe Passage Project. We provide free  
20 legal representation to over 1,600 immigrant children  
21 and youth in New York City and Long Island. While  
the City Council support through initiatives like  
UMFI and the SIJ initiative has been completely  
transformative, current funding must increase to meet

the needs of our clients as we face a federal administration determined to eviscerate protections for immigrant youth. The federal government is now bafflingly targeting special immigrant juveniles, despite their humanitarian pathway to lawful permanent residency. Since November 2025, ICE has conducted unlawful, racially-motivated arrests of two of our SIJ clients with no criminal records, stripping them of deferred action and work authorization. One of our Brooklyn clients has been detained for nearly four months while his habeas proceedings continue. These cases require significant additional attorney hours for complex federal litigation. Furthermore, USCIS' gutting of deferred action for SIJ beneficiaries has left young people without work permits, forcing them into the shadows and increasing their vulnerability in housing instability and labor exploitation. Simultaneously, the federal government has conducted a purge of experienced immigration judges, replacing them with individuals lacking immigration experience and possessing demonstrated anti-immigrant biases. The Board of Immigration Appeals has issued a huge number of binding decisions attacking due process. Our

1 attorneys must now prepare every case for eventual  
2 review by the US Court of Appeals for the Second  
3 Circuit. Finally, the President's HR1 bill has  
4 created punishing new fees for applications for  
5 humanitarian relief like SIJ and asylum where it now  
6 costs over \$1,000 to appeal a decision in Immigration  
7 Court. Safe Passage project staff will not back down.  
8 We will do everything we need to do to protect our  
9 clients, but as our cases become more labor-intensive  
10 and expensive, our capacity to take new clients has  
11 reduced. We urge this committee to increase our  
12 funding so we can meet the complex needs of immigrant  
13 children in this historic moment. Thank you.

14 JANET MILLER: Thank you, Chair  
15 Encarnacion and the Committee and finance staff, for  
16 the opportunity to testify today. My name is Janet  
17 Miller and I work at CAMBA. I'm here to request your  
18 support of two critical programs. First, a \$1  
19 million investment in the New York City Immigration  
20 Resettlement Initiative, a coordinated citywide  
21 effort led by five trusted local resettlement  
organizations, CAMBA, Catholic Charities, Church  
World Services, Common Point, and the International  
Rescue Committee. Collectively, we have responded to



nearly every major migration and displacement movement impacting New York City over the past five decades. This critical support will serve approximately 4,000 vulnerable immigrant New Yorkers citywide. NYC- NYCSERI [sic], is uniquely positioned to deliver holistic resettlement informed case management services addressing both immediate stabilization needs and building long-term pathways to integration and self-sufficiency. Second, the legal services for the working poor, a coalition of CAMBA, HDAC [sic], Mobilization for Justice, NYMIC [sp?], and Take Root Justice- the coalition was created with the support from council over 20 years ago to address the civil legal needs of working poor New Yorkers whose income renders them ineligible for free legal services. This year, CAMBA and the other members of the coalition are each requesting \$600,000 allocation from the council. This investment will support critical legal services in immigration, consumer, workers' rights and benefits law. The impact of cuts, actions and policy changes on the federal level threaten the social safety net and put working poor and immigrant New Yorkers at risk of facing catastrophic consequences from immigration

1 abuses, housing instability, trauma, illegal debt  
2 collection, the wrongful termination of benefits, and  
3 other threats to their wellbeing. It is vitally  
4 important that the council continue to support both  
5 of these initiatives and help us help working poor  
6 and immigrant New Yorkers to obtain and maintain  
7 financial independence and economic stability. Thank  
8 you so much.

9 KELLY AGNEW-BARAJAS: Okay. Good  
10 afternoon, Chair Encarnacion, the Council and the  
11 finance staff. I'm Kelly Agnew-Barajas. I'm here on  
12 behalf of Immigrant Refugee Services of Catholic  
13 Charities. Every day we meet New Yorkers who are  
14 working, learning, contributing to their communities  
15 despite navigating fear, instability, and  
16 increasingly complex immigration landscape. My  
17 colleague Desiree will follow my testimony and focus  
18 on legal and hotline services. And in my testimony,  
19 I plan to urge you to support the programs that we  
20 have working with day laborers communities, our adult  
21 literacy and ESOL programs, and the New Immigrant  
Resettlement Initiative that Janet mentioned. So, let  
me just begin with a recent story. One of our day  
laborers in the Bronx last week showed up seeking

work with others that were there that day and was picked up by ICE. That means that a father that day was removed from his family. They lost their dad. They lost their bread-winner. So, in this situation where so many people are facing unsafe working conditions, threats to their livelihoods, threats to their lives, they are exposed to exploitation, wage theft and potential loss of liberty. With Council support, we provide safety training, job placement, and a dignified space for these folks to access work. We see also the power of education in our ESOL programs. One student proudly enrolled in BMCC just this past January because of the long-term support that he received. Only two to three percent of adults who need literacy services can access them. Without sustained investment, hundreds will lose the pathway to this vital service. One of our Afghan clients was also- with legal status- was also recently detained. We were able to eventually work to have- secure his release. But this is the example of people who are falling through the cracks despite trying to do everything the right way, and that one of the important reasons that our new funding initiative, the Immigrant Resettlement, is so essential. So, we

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

Thank you all. I will now call up your colleague, Desiree Hernandez-Sanchez, Bethany Dill, Aracelis Lucero, Christina Garrity- Garrity, sorry- looking at some of these- I'm trying to see them. Raluca and Chad Born. And then the next panel will be Lucia- so the next panel following this one will be Lucia, Charles Brown, Luis Mancheno, Louis- this is a double one, too- and Paul Fleck. Hello. You may begin.

CHRISTINA GARRITY: Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion and members of the Immigration Committee. My name is Christina Garrity and I'm the coordinator for the Pro Se Plus Project, otherwise known as PSPP. We are a collaborative made up of four legal service providers and two community-based organizations. I'm here today to advocate for the funding of Pro Se legal services to the Asylum-seeker Legal Assistance Network, or ASLAN. The \$5.7 we request today will go not only to PSPP, but to Lutheran Social Services,

CUNY Citizenship Now, and Catholic Charities. When the network was originally convened in 2023, the providers before you today were tasked with meeting the enormous gap in pro bono legal services for hundreds of thousands of newly-arrived New Yorkers who are looking to file asylum applications, request temporary protected status, and obtain work authorization. Indeed, the founding of ASLAN was part of a broader effort to position New York City as a national model of what it means to welcome immigrants with open arms. Our duty was to straddle the world of light-touch pro se provided by the Asylum Application Help Center and that of full representation. Nearly three years later, we can say that we have made good on that promise. PSPP alone has screened over 10,000 newly-arrived community members and offered over 7,500 units of pro se services to individuals unable to retain full representation. We are proud to say that many of the community members whom we supported with initial applications have returned for other services, a testament to the relationship building and ASLAN provider's unique approach to pro se service delivery. Our shared commitment to meeting immigrant community members' needs, no matter how

legally complex, can be seen in the ways that PSPP partners and our colleagues across ASLAN have pivoted time and time again since the second election of President Trump. Shortly after election results were released, MASA began offering comprehensive emergency planning for families. Unlocal ramped up their Know Your Rights presentations so that community members would be prepared for increased ICE activity and prepared for potential detention. African Communities Together started to hold mental health circles. In May, when ICE began unlawfully detaining law-abiding community members at their master calendar hearings. New York Legal Assistance Groups supervising attorneys began moderating the situation and have become leaders in filing habeas petitions pro se. Since the implementation of pre-termination and an asylum cooperative agreements this past winter, Central American Legal Assistance and Catholic Migration Services have worked tirelessly to file response to pre termination [sic] and pro se appeals. Our multi-year track proves that we can be trusted to meet the needs of immigrant New Yorkers regardless of how quickly they shift and evolve. Pro se respondents often belong to the most vulnerable

1  
2 immigrant communities. At a time when such  
3 communities across the country are under attack, it  
4 is critical that we continue to provide them with  
5 much needed legal support. Funding established pro  
6 se service providers gives us the flexibility  
7 necessary to respond to the demands of the moment and  
8 to present and reduce the harm of today's violent  
9 federal immigration policies and practices. Finally,  
10 given that the current scapegoating of immigrant  
11 communities is an integral product of the federal  
12 administration's increasing turn towards  
13 authoritarianism. Funding pro se services stops  
14 just being about ensuring that all New Yorkers have  
15 access to justice. It's about standing up for our  
16 city as a sanctuary and our country as a democracy.  
17 Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

18 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

19 CHARLES BROWN: Good afternoon. Thank  
20 you to Chair Encarnacion, the committee and committee  
21 staff. My name is Charles Brown. I'm the Director of  
the Immigration Legal Program at Lutheran Social  
Services of New York. and I'm here to testify in  
support of continued funding for immigration legal  
services, including funding for the ASLAn parents

here today and listed moment again in Chirstina's testimony. Lutheran is a proud member of ASLAN and we continue to witness the profound effect that our limited scope of pro se services have on immigrant New Yorkers. Right now, immigrant workers seeing asylum, special immigrants, juvenile status, or other relief are up against a complicated and confusing system increasingly designed to forcibly remove them from the United States. Without any consideration of whether they meet the definition of a refugee, or are eligible for another form of relief. Indeed immigration law and process has grown evermore complicated under the current administration. As the Federal Government increasingly relies on complicated procedures, confusion and high costs to deny immigration applications. City Council funding for ASLAN helps to lower or eliminate some of these barriers for our immigrant neighbors who may otherwise be denied due process. Enabling us to assist them with immigration applications, application fees, filing for appeals, filing motion to prevent their removal to a third country, information sessions, and much more. Indeed, ASLAN's pro se services go far beyond simply filing one



1 application. Youth come to our offices seeking  
2 assistance for SIJ, sometimes weeks or days before  
3 they age out of eligibility. We help that young  
4 person to file in Family Court, to file with USCIS,  
5 and to respond in Immigration Court. People come to  
6 our office after an immigration judge has denied  
7 their asylum case. They haven't had a full hearing.  
8 They don't know they were removed or even to where  
9 they're being removed. ASLAN helps that person. We  
10 help them to figure it out. We help them to file an  
11 appeal, to stand up for their right to have a full  
12 and fair hearing. We need City Council to stand up  
13 for us, for ASLAN and PSPP, as we fight for and with  
14 our immigrant neighbors, providing them with  
15 comprehensive pro se legal services at a crucial time  
16 in our nation and city's history. Thank you.

15 RALUCA ONCIOIU: Good afternoon, Chair  
16 Encarnacion, Council Members and staff. My name is  
17 Ralucca Oncioiu. I know it's a hard name, and I'm the  
18 Managing Attorney of the Immigration Unit at Catholic  
19 Migration Services, or CMS for short. Thank you for  
20 giving me the opportunity to speak to you today about  
21 PSPP, ASLAN and pro se services in general in these  
uncertain times. Every week, CMS staff meets New

Yorkers who carry the world on their shoulders, fear, hope and the weight of impossible choices. Many fled violence, persecution, or crushing instability. They come to the US seeking safety and instead find themselves alone in one of the most complex legal systems. As the number of unrepresented immigrants in removal proceeding has surged in recent years, the need for legal support has reached a level I have never seen before in more than two decades of this work. Our collaborative Pro Se Plus Project was born out of this need, to give people at least a fighting chance. What began as a program centered on helping eligible individuals apply for asylum before their one-year filing deadline has now become a lifeline. In 2023, the city funded PSPP as part of ASLAN. Over the last three years, ASLAN and PSPP partners have built longstanding trust with the community with individuals and families returning to us for services and information over and over again, sometimes close to a deadline. At this point, the plus in Pro Se Plus might as well mean rapid and constant response, because that we do. Since January 2025, as the face of new arrivals slowed and hostile immigration policies ramped up, the needs of immigrant New

1  
2 Yorkers have changed. People who filed their  
3 applications long time ago need help preparing for  
4 their next stage of their cases. Meanwhile  
5 heightened immigration enforcement has created fear  
6 and chaos. In the face of this, PSPP teams have  
7 stepped up with all the tools we have at our  
8 disposal, emergency family planning assistance,  
9 accompaniment to sensitive appointments, motions for  
10 remote hearings, responses to pre-termination [sic],  
11 and appeals of removal orders, as well as Pro Se  
12 habeas petitions. We also provide community  
13 presentations to counter misinformation, prevent  
14 fraud, and equip community members with a better  
15 understanding of their rights and how legal  
16 developments affect their cases. Just one last  
17 point. Full representation is always the gold  
18 standard, but the truth is that demand far outpaces  
19 available capacity, and that's where Pro Se Plus  
20 services come in, and we hope that City Council will  
21 continue to fund them.

18 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

19 ARACELIS LUCERO: Good afternoon. Thank  
20 you to the Immigration Chair Encarnacion, the  
21 Immigration Committee Members and Finance Committee

staff here, and for the opportunity to be able to testify today. My name is Aracelis Lucero and I am the Executive Director of MASA. We're a community-based organization in the south Bronx that supports Latin American indigenous children, youth and families to develop as strong learners and leaders. MASA has over two decades of experience supporting immigrant communities, navigating the complex immigration system, informing hundreds of thousands about their rights and providing emergency planning support. I'd like to share a MASA PSPP story to help illustrate the impact of the Pro Se Plus Project. Maria, which is not her real name, migrated from Nicaragua in pursuit of safety. Unfortunately, she became the victim of immigration fraud. She paid \$5,000 to an individual posing as an attorney and had a fake hearing scheduled with a fake judge, only to discover the documents and the hearing were all falsified. The emotion and financial devastation was profound. She faced not only legal jeopardy, but also loss of trust in the legal system. Nonetheless, she arrived at MASA for a mini consult with an attorney for Co-Counsel [sic] NYC where the immigration fraud and the existence of a removal order were verified.

1 With ICE checking in for her- with an ICE check-in  
2 for her, her husband, and her young son scheduled for  
3 the next morning, an interdisciplinary team of five  
4 MASA and co-counsel advocates sprung into action and  
5 within just a few hours had prepared filing an  
6 emergency motion to reopen, notified ICE of the  
7 automatic stay of removal, completed and filed her  
8 asylum application, translated dozens of messages and  
9 documents from the scammers, and created an emergency  
10 plan with guardianship and travel documents for her  
11 eight-year-old son should she and her husband be  
12 detained. This illustrates the power of PSPP, where  
13 organization was able to provide a full suite of  
14 services in an emergency situation. We urge the City  
15 Council to fund ASLAN at \$5.7 million in fiscal year  
16 27 so that we can continue to help immigrant  
17 communities who cannot find or afford direct legal  
18 representation.

16 BETHANY DILL: Good afternoon, Chair

17 Encarnacion and members of the committees. Thank you  
18 for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name  
19 is Bethany Dill and I'm the Community Engagement  
20 Coordinator with the International Rescue Committee,  
21 or the IRC. I'm grateful to be here today along our

1 partners who you heard from earlier in the New York  
2 City Immigrant Resettlement Initiative, or NYCIRI. I  
3 want to build on what you've heard today by focusing  
4 on what we're seeing daily and why case management  
5 which we as a coalition of resettlement agencies are  
6 working to protect and strengthen is so critical to  
7 newcomers in our city at this moment. We're  
8 increasingly working with individuals and families  
9 who are eligible for services, but facing many  
10 complex barriers to accessing and navigating them in  
11 a meaningful way. Rapid changes in federal policy,  
12 shifting rules for qualifying and maintaining  
13 support, and fragmented systems mean that even  
14 highly-motivated individuals are struggling to access  
15 housing, health care, legal support, and employment  
16 pathways in a coordinated way. What we're seeing is  
17 not a simple lack of services, it's a breakdown in  
18 navigation, connecting to services and staying  
19 connected. Without consistent trusted case  
20 management, small barriers compound quickly, a missed  
21 documents, a misunderstood eligibility rule, a  
delayed referral. These gaps can lead to prolonged  
shelter stay, loss of work authorization  
opportunities, worsening health conditions, and

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DESIREE HERNANDEZ-SANCHEZ: Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion and members of the committee. My name is Desiree Hernandez-Sanchez, and I am the legal director at Catholic Charities Community Services. We provide legal services to over 7,500 immigrants each year, providing critical legal representation, pro se services, and other support to some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Given the current climate, the city's increased investment in Catholic Charities has been essential to sustaining

our work. Last year, the city provided a critical extension to our Action NYC contract, enabling us to stand up innovative services for people in removal proceedings which included initially- those initially served by the asylum application help centers and our Immigration Court Help Desk. As immigrants face pretermination of services without hearings and removal orders to third countries, our service model has been responsive to these and other issues. We have implemented comprehensive clinics to assist with asylum application filings and declaration writing. We also reviewed and helped [inaudible] filed applications, develop country conditions, evidence, and prepare people for their trials. We have asked MOIA to continue this funding for FY27 so that we can continue to build on this impactful model. As a 10-year provider of legal services in New York City Public Schools, we've also requested \$1 million from City Council for FY27 for a dedicated program to provide on-site services within school communities. While we have continued this work, our capacity is limited and demand is high. With this funding, Catholic Charities will build on existing partnerships with over 125 schools. We're also



1 seeking an increase in funding for the Haitian  
2 Response Initiative which is the lifeline for Haitian  
3 immigrants who have been disproportionately attacked  
4 and impacted in changes affecting TPS [inaudible] and  
5 other access to legal relief. To meet this moment,  
6 we urge the city to continue investing in and  
7 adequately funding our legal programs that include  
8 ICARE, the SIJ initiative and MOIA hotline so that we  
9 can continue to sustain services and deliver  
meaningful outcomes.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you so  
11 much. Thank you all. Now calling up the next panel.  
12 Luis Mancheno, Lucia from NYLPI, Charles Brown from  
13 Lutheran Social Services, Paul Fleck from Immigration  
14 Law and Justice New York, and Ligia Guallpa from  
15 Worker's Justice Project. Five. No worries. And the  
16 next panel- if you're in other room, please get  
17 ready- is Hsia Jack from Chinese American Planning  
18 Council, Nikita Boyce, Ahyoung Kim from Asian  
19 American Federation, Maia Dillane, Arab American  
20 Families Support Center, and Timothy Fallon. That is  
21 our next panel. Please be ready. You may begin.  
Thank you.

LUIS MANCHENO: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion and members of the Committee. My name is Luis Mancheno and I am the Citywide Director of Immigrant Justice at Legal Services New York City. I speak today on behalf of dozens of advocates across our city who work tirelessly every day to provide critical legal services to immigrant New Yorkers. Over the past year, as you all know, the need has been overwhelming. Last year alone, our intake line received more than 10,000 calls from individuals seeking legal immigration help. Because of capacity constraints, we were only able to open a couple of hundreds cases out of those 10,000 calls. At the same time, the work has become more urgent and more complex than ever before. This year, for the first time in our organization's 60-year history, we represented detained clients through habeas federal litigation and we prevail. Our advocates are also on the ground every week accompanying clients to ICE check-ins, standing beside them in moments of fear and uncertainty, and advocating to prevent their detention and removal. And yet, despite these victories, we're also confronting a painful truth.

1 For many of our families, we may not be able to  
2 prevent what is coming. That is why we have begun  
3 conducting family preparedness clinics, helping  
4 parents and children prepare for the possibility of  
5 separation. During one of those clinics, I  
6 personally had to hold a mother's hand as she signed  
7 papers away awarding temporary custody for her  
8 two-year-old child in case she would be abruptly  
9 detained and deported. No mother should have to plan  
10 for that. No child in New York City should have to  
11 live with that reality. We understand that the city  
12 is facing serious financial constraints, but failing  
13 to invest in immigration legal services will come at  
14 a far greater cost. We urge the Council to fully fund  
15 the budget request put forward by the immigration  
16 legal services providers. Specifically, we request  
17 that the Council awards the \$1 million that Legal  
18 Services New York City has requested in order to  
19 attempt to meet the need for legal services in the  
20 immigrant community. Thank you so much.

18 LUCIA CUENCA: Good afternoon and thank  
19 you to the Chair Encarnacion and the members of the  
20 committee for holding this public hearing. My name  
21 is Lucia Cuenca and I am the Immigration Attorney for

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest Health Justice Program. Our Health Justice Program brings a racial equity and immigrant justice focus to health care advocacy. We offer both direct immigration representation and systemic advocacy for immigrant New Yorkers living with serious medical conditions, disabilities, and for asylum-seekers in need of gender-affirming care and HIV-related services. With your support through the Immigrant Health Initiative and Immigrant Opportunity Initiative we've been able to provide direct representation in over 60 cases since the beginning of 2025 while providing advice and counsel to many more. Our Know Your Rights trainings have reached hundreds of vulnerable New Yorkers and our medical advocacy trainings have attracted hundreds of clinicians willing to offer medical advocacy for detained New Yorkers through our medical provider network, a service we offer to legal service providers across the city. Still our work continues to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of New York's most vulnerable immigrants. Over the last year, the risk of detention for all immigrants has increased substantially, posing a particularly deadly risk for New Yorkers with medical conditions.

The sharp increase in detention rates have made one thing clear, there is no health in detention.

Detained immigrants experience medical abuse, neglect and discrimination with those of transgender or gender non-conforming experience at additional risk.

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest is meeting this moment. In addition to our continuing direct immigration representation and health care advocacy, we've expanded our response in defense of New York's most vulnerable immigrants by providing accompaniment to all check-ins and preparing habeas corpus petitions for clients at risk of detention.

Harnessing the strengths of our volunteer medical providers, pro bono partners and community partners, we recently won the release of two New Yorkers who faced medical neglect while in ICE custody detained at centers across the country. As the needs of our community continue to evolve, as new threats from the federal government arise, we are grateful for your support of our work and our clients, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to improve health access and equity for all New Yorkers.

PAUL FLECK: Good afternoon, Chair

Encarnacion and members of the committee. My name is

Paul Fleck and I am the Executive Director of Immigration Law and Justice New York. We are very grateful to have been awarded City Council discretionary funds in this last fiscal year, but I call ourselves awardees rather than recipients, because we still haven't received those funds. Being somewhat of a newbie in the City Council discretionary funding ecosystem, I've really found it odd and difficult difficult to navigate. I want to start out by saying that the various city staff working on this are not to blame, because I found them to be in a world that has been devaluing public service, they have been exemplary public servants. I think specifically of Cornelia Branzan of the Department of Social Services who contacted me the day of the first snow storm on a Sunday in the afternoon. That's real dedication. All these folks inherited a strange system not of their making. I will use our Special Immigrant Juvenile Status award as an example. We received an email notifying us that we've been accepted for the award in mid-August. That same email said we were to begin the work effective July 1st. Being a rather tiny organization with attorneys who have maxed themselves out in terms

1 of their caseloads, this was daunting. I wanted to  
2 hire and begin to take on additional SIJ clients  
3 immediately. The problem was we didn't have the cash  
4 to do so. One option I was told was to try to obtain  
5 and advance from the city or alternatively get a line  
6 of credit for the fund from the City of New York.  
7 This was very difficult because we needed a contract  
8 in place. I was told it would take a minimum of four  
9 months to get a contract in place. Today, as I speak  
10 to you, we still don't have a contract in place. We  
11 have an incredibly talented young attorney interested  
12 in joining our organization, and I'm eager to hire  
13 her, but I'm constrained to do so. Make no mistake,  
14 we'll continue to work on SIJ cases for young people  
15 in the city with our existing staff. However, we  
16 could most certainly do more if properly and  
17 expeditiously funded.

18 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. And  
19 thank you for highlighting that. I know that's been a  
20 really big issue across a lot of organizations and  
21 not just under immigration, but many, many of the  
city agencies. Many of our nonprofit organizations  
are facing that. So thank you for highlighting that  
during your testimony. I really appreciate it.

PAUL FLECK: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, we have a bit of a change for the next panel. We swapped one person out. But it is still Jack Hsia from Chinese-American Planning Council, Nikita Boyce, Ahyoung Kim, Timothy Fallon, and Nilbia Coyote from New York Immigrant Empowerment, NICE [sic]. Please find your way up here, and I'm going to read off the names for the next panel. Maia- Maia Dillane, Ira from Adult Literacy, Kaveh Sarfehjooy, Sophia Shi, and Teresa Baik. These are all for the next panel. So you could start making your way over to the room. And you may begin. I'm not sure who wants to begin, which way.

JACK HSIA: Thank you, Chair Encarnacion and members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jack Hsia, and I am an Immigration Attorney at Chinese American Planning Council, one of the largest providers of social services to immigrants in New York. I would like to tell you all about the story of one of these incredibly resilient families in a CBC afterschool program and why we need more investment in holistic immigration and legal and social services. In 2023,



1 Mr. and Mrs. Chen, their young daughter Annie fled  
2 China in order to apply for asylum here. They moved  
3 to New York where despite the language barrier, they  
4 found restaurant jobs and apartment to rent, and  
5 Annie began attending elementary school, and they  
6 started their new lives. Dad worked as a food  
7 delivery driver. He dropped and picked up Annie from  
8 school every single day. They attended church on  
9 weekends, and Annie enrolled in a CPC afterschool  
10 program and a Saturday dance class, and their lives  
11 were thrown into chaos in September when dad missed a  
12 routine ICE check-in, because he had injuries  
13 sustained when he was hit by a car during his job.  
14 When he showed up to 26 Federal Plaza just a couple  
15 days later, ICE detained him and told his family that  
16 he was going to be transferred out of state and  
17 deported. Mom suddenly needed to single-handedly  
18 manage searching for legal help for her husband,  
19 gathering documents and evidence. She had to manage  
20 her own case, childcare, finances for the family and  
21 for months their six-year-old daughter Annie cried  
every single day struggling to understand why her dad  
had suddenly disappeared. Normally, families can  
apply for asylum as a unit, but immigration

1 authorities separated their cases after detaining the  
2 dad. This meant that they needed to find a second  
3 lawyer. Mom doesn't speak English, so CPC's  
4 afterschool worker helped her make dozens of calls  
5 every day when she came to pick up her daughter from  
6 her afterschool program. And when we did hear back,  
7 both free and private immigration attorneys said they  
8 were already overwhelmed with cases, has expensive  
9 consultation fees, and that representation cost  
10 upwards of tens of thousands of dollars. Fortunately,  
11 that case was taken by NYIFUP by Legal Aid Society  
12 and they helped him win withholding removal, but  
13 months later he's still detained despite the lack of  
14 criminal charges. The family's facing financial  
15 hardship and mom is relying on CPC services and her  
16 community to keep her clothed and fed, and now she  
17 has to face her own immigration hearing. It's been-  
18 it's always been really hard for immigrants to get  
19 legal help, but now more than ever we need to not  
20 only invest in immigrant legal services, but all  
21 their social services support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

NIKITA BOYCE: Hi. Thank you to the  
Chair Encarnacion, members of the committee,

Committee Council, finance staff. Good to see you.

My name is Nikita Boyce. I'm the Budget Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families where I lead the 18 percent in growing campaign which is a city-based campaign for budget equity, specifically for Asian American organizations. AAPI New Yorkers are the fastest growing population in New York City, but we have the highest rate of poverty. And despite the fact that we make up almost 18 percent of the population, we get just about six percent of all discretionary funding. That is completely inequitable considering the work that AAPI nonprofits and community-based organizations do across the city. Some of the services that we offer as AAPI nonprofits include legal services, domestic violence support, comprehensive case management, culturally-appropriate food pantries, language and translation services, youth leadership development, senior and elder support, government benefits, health care navigation, rapid response programs, and there are more that I'm not including. It is a lot, and many of the clients that we serve are immigrants and really, really need support during this time. AAPI New Yorkers, in

1 particular, are being targeted by the federal  
2 administration. East, South Asian, and Southeast  
3 Asian folks are at- just really struggling right now  
4 as our community members. And so what we're asking  
5 today in addition to funding the priorities of the  
6 18 percent and growing campaign, which I'll cover at  
7 the end, are fully funding legal services for  
8 immigrants. That means baselining and expanding the  
9 funding going forward. Council has done an amazing  
10 job in the last year of doing that, but we need more.  
11 It's not enough yet. Disabled immigrants need more  
12 solid supports. Queer and trans immigrants from all  
13 around the world need our support now more than ever,  
14 and there are amazing organizations that need the  
15 funding to do it. And finally, we ask for not just  
16 budget equity for AAPI orgs, but also resource  
17 equity. That means understanding how resources are  
18 allocated. So for immigrant New Yorkers that are  
19 survivors of domestic violence, they're not going to  
20 the police. We can no longer use police reports as a  
21 measure of funding. So we ask you-

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: [interposing]

Thank you.

NIKITA BOYCE: to stand by us and also  
fund the 18 Percent Growing Campaign.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Got you.

AHYOUNG KIM: Good afternoon, Chair  
Encarnacion and the members of the committee. Thank  
you for this opportunity to testify. My name is  
Ahyoung Kim and I serve as the Director of Programs  
at the Asian American Federation. We work with over  
70 organizations across the city that serve 1.5  
million Asian New Yorkers. New York City calls  
itself a sanctuary city, but for many Asian  
immigrants today, as you have so far heard today,  
that promise is increasingly fragile. We are seeing  
a rising fear driven by aggressive federal  
immigration enforcement including expanded ICE  
presence in airports. Families are afraid to travel  
or to seek services and parents are afraid to  
accompany their own children to immigration hearings.  
You have heard many stories today where individuals  
and families are making impossible decisions, because  
of where we are falling behind, and I'm here today to  
ask for the Council to continue the support to make  
sure that the Asian communities have the services and  
the resources that are important for making sure that

our immigrants and vulnerable New Yorkers know of their rights and have the basic services they need to live in dignity in our city. One of these services are the Council initiative for legal services for AAPI communities. We are asking for \$3.5 million in funding to this initiative so that we can continue to support the Asian American Federation's Rapid Immigrant Support and Empowerment initiative which we also call as RISE. Under this initiative we have gathered 16 organizations in New York City that can bring more legal services to their constituents, but more importantly, Chair, we're making sure that our member organizations are aware of what each other's doing. Right now, organizations are unaware of what resources are available, what information is most updated, and they don't know who has the capacity to cover for each other when there's a need for referrals. We need to make sure that there's a system in place to make sure there's communication and efficiency in providing these essential services, and making sure that our community members are not wasting time looking for more resources or whoever can help. Secondly, we're also asking- may I just finish, just 10 seconds? We're also asking for \$5.8

million in support of the Language Justice Collaborative. The Federation was really excited to launch the Asian Language Workers-

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: [interposing]

I'm going to ask you just for the numbers so that we can move forward, okay? So, the \$5.--

AHYOUNG KIM: \$5.8 million.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Okay, perfect.

Thank you.

NILBIA COYOTE: Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion, members of the committee, committee council and finance team. Thank you for including me to testify in this very powerful panel. My name is Nilbia Coyote. I am the Executive Director of New Immigrant Community Empowerment, NICE, located in Jackson Heights, Queens- proudly one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the country, not the only one. For over 26 years NICE has been a trusted community organization and a front line responder for New York City immigrant workers. During some of our city's most difficult moments, as well as moments of opportunity and growth, our deep roots in the community allow us to reach immigrants who are often considered hard to reach, but who are in reality

1 simply underserved, overworked, and navigating  
2 complex systems alone, as well as the current  
3 affordability crisis in our city. Today, NICE's core  
4 purpose is to drive economic mobility and community  
5 integration among immigrant families through our  
6 workforce and life skills model that we call the  
7 Pre-Apprenticeship Program for Life and Work. This  
8 program reflects what immigrant New Yorkers continue  
9 needing, job and legal services, but also the tools  
10 to build stable lives such as English and digital  
11 literacy, and knowledge to navigate critical life  
12 skills, and systems such as transportation, housing,  
13 health, finance, and identification to support their  
14 families and become long-term contributors to our  
15 city. We were encouraged to hear today about the  
16 importance of protecting and empowering immigrants  
17 through safe access to services and better  
18 coordination across agencies so immigrant families  
19 are included in the city broader affordability agenda  
20 regardless of immigration status. These priorities  
21 are fully aligned with the work that we do every day  
at NICE. this is why we respectfully ask the City  
Council to continuing championing immigrant workers  
by renewing initiatives such as the Daily Labor



1 Workforce Initiative and enhancing our collective ask  
2 to \$4.9, but also other initiatives such as  
3 construction site safety training, Welcome NYC, legal  
4 services for low-income immigrants, adult literacy  
5 forward [sic], and many Speaker's initiatives.

6 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

7 NILBIA COYOTE: Just five seconds. We  
8 also urge the Council to consider new funding  
9 opportunities for immigrant workers such as digital  
10 inclusion in Greener NYC workforce so immigrant  
11 workers are not left behind in the future of our  
12 city's economy. Thank you so much.

13 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

14 TIMOTHY FALLON: Thank you for the  
15 opportunity to testify today. I am Timothy Fallon,  
16 Managing Attorney of the Immigration Practice at Her  
17 Justice, a nonprofit organization that has advocated  
18 with and for women and gender minorities living in  
19 poverty in New York City for the last 30 years. In  
20 fiscal year 2025, Her Justice served more than 4,000  
21 women and their children across all five boroughs in  
Family Court and Supreme Court in areas including  
child and spousal support, custody and visitation,  
orders of protection, divorce, and immigration

1 matters under the Violence Against Women Act. Our  
2 immigration practice provides free legal assistance  
3 to survivors of domestic violence, labor trafficking,  
4 sex trafficking, and other forms of gender-based  
5 violence as they seek to stabilize their immigration  
6 status in the United States. Last year, our legal  
7 staff provided legal information advice and  
8 representation on 2,058 immigration matters, securing  
9 legal status for 802 clients and their children. Our  
10 work emphasizes securing legal pathways to  
11 immigration relief through survivor-based affirmative  
12 applications such as [inaudible] petitions,  
13 applications for U and T Visas. However, this  
14 affirmative work is becoming increasingly difficult  
15 as you've heard today. Amid heightened ICE  
16 enforcement, increasing processing delays, and  
17 barriers such as the lack of timely receipt notices,  
18 all of which can leave survivors in prolonged periods  
19 of legal uncertainty. Right now, many immigrant  
20 survivors are afraid to come forward and seek help.  
21 Heightened immigration enforcement has intensified  
fear within immigrant communities to turning  
survivors from seeking assistance from lawyers,  
hospitals, and law enforcement. Many are avoiding

critical services out of fear of detention and removal. These dynamics undermine access to justice and de-stabilized survivors seeking lawful status and safety. The specter of removals increasing for our clients as you've heard citywide. Where appropriate, Her Justice represents clients in removal proceedings with the goal of seeking termination or admin closure of their cases. Motions to reopen and terminate removal proceedings are highly complex, and we're thankful for the opportunity to testify today and let you know about our services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. Did everybody get to go? We skipped around, so I wanted to make sure. Okay. So, I'm going to call up the next panel. Ira from Adult Literacy. I can't make out the last name. I apologize. Kaveh Sarfehjooy from Literacy Partners, Sophia Shi, Teresa Baik, Bike? And Maia Dillane. And oh- okay. Alright. Hi everyone. Alright, which way we starting? You got the mic on, so you go.

IRA YANKWITT: Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion and finance staff. My name is Ira Yankwitt and I am the Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center. I am also a proud member

of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy, or NYCCAL. Currently, there are over 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English language proficiency or who do not have a high school diploma, yet public funding for adult literacy education is so limited that fewer than three percent of these New Yorkers are able to access adult basic education, GED, or ESOL classes in any given year. In total, there is approximately \$103.5 million in federal, state and city funding for adult literacy education in New York City. Over \$24 million of this funding comes from the federal government, but right now, the Trump administration is seeking to exclude students from federally-funded adult literacy classes based on their immigration status. Approximately 1.7 million of the 2.2 million adults in need of adult literacy services are immigrants, as are over 75 percent of current adult literacy students. Such restrictions could have a devastating effect on immigrant communities. In response, as Council Member Brewer noted earlier, NYCCAL is calling on the mayor to invest \$20 million in a new city adult education funding stream, Education for Integration Inequity, that would provide new seats and unfettered access to

English language, basic education, digital literacy, high school equivalency, and civics education classes for immigrant New Yorkers regardless of their status. This investment would be in addition to the \$12 million included in the FY27 Preliminary Budget to continue to fund DYCD RFP contracted programs. NYCCAL is also calling on the City Council to increase council discretionary funding for adult literacy education from \$14.5 million to \$18 million and to consolidate the two current council discretionary initiatives for adult literacy under Adult Literacy Forward. This funding has become vital to the 63 CBOs, community colleges and library programs that receive it, and increasing the funding would enable these programs and potentially others to serve thousands more adults in need. Thank you.

KAVEH SARFEHJOOY: Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion and members of the committee. My name is Kaveh Sarfehjooy and I'm the Executive Director of the Liz Smith Center for Adult Family Learning at Literacy Partners, a 50-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening literacy two generations at a time through educational media, community workshops for immigrant families that focus

on early literacy and formal STEM, science and reading, and ESOL and literacy classes. We're also a proud member- thank you. We're also a proud member of NYCCAL, New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy, a coalition of teachers, program leaders, students analyzed from community-based organizations, CUNY campuses, libraries across the five boroughs. As Ira mentioned, 2.2 million adults have limited English proficiency, and only three percent are served through funding currently. In response, [inaudible] also is calling on the mayor to invest \$20 million in new adult education funding stream. This investment would be in addition to the \$12 million included in the FY27 Preliminary Budget. In closing, I want to share the words of one of our students, Yesenia, who couldn't be here, and she asked that we share her story in spaces where decisions are made that affect families and children who depend on literacy classes and immigrant services. Yesenia was detained during routine immigration status appointment and during that detention she was separated from her husband and her child who has autism spectrum disorder for five days. These are her words: In the detention center,

1 everything was in English and everyone spoke English.  
2 I became a translator for the friend I made from  
3 other countries who were also detained, helping them  
4 communicate their basic needs, because they didn't  
5 know how to ask for things in English, even something  
6 as simple as water. With the little English I  
7 learned in these classes I was able to help them get  
8 the necessities they needed. That experience gave me  
9 the confidence to speak without fear, not only to  
10 advocate for myself, but also for others who had no  
11 way to communicate. The English Yesenia used to  
12 advocate for herself and for others was learned in  
13 part through her parent-focused ESOL classes. She  
14 credits that learning as instrument to help navigate  
15 the tensions [inaudible] and reunite with her family.  
16 Thank you for your attention. I appreciate it.

15 SOPHIA SHI: Good afternoon, Chair  
16 Encarnacion and members of the committee. My name is  
17 Sophia Shi and I am a program coordinator at Korean  
18 Community Services of Metropolitan New York, also  
19 known as KCS. As a nonprofit our organization has  
20 been providing a multitude of services to underserved  
21 communities across New York City for over 53 years,  
KCS is also a proud member of NYCCAL. At KCS we have

seen firsthand importance and positive impact of adult literacy classes in our community. Recently, I had spoke of a student who had been taking ESOL classes for over a year. Her initial goal was to improve her vocabulary and grow more confident in speaking with her community members. She's now pursuing a career in translation with hopes to travel around the country. We continuously see students go above and beyond during the initial goals, whether it in their careers, education or personal aspirations. Ou adult literacy services have expanded over the years to meet increasing demand. However, like others, our resources are limited. NYCCALL is calling on the mayor to invest \$20 million in a new city adult education funding stream, education for integration and equity. That would provide a new stream and unfettered access to English language, basic education, digital literacy, high school equivalency, and civics education for immigrant New Yorkers regardless of their status. NYCCAL is also calling on the City Council to increase council discretionary funding for adult literacy education from \$14.5 million to \$18 million, and to consolidate the two current council discretionary initiative for



1 adult literacy under- under Adult LIteracy Forward.  
2 New York City Council discretionary adult literacy  
3 funding in indispensable for our city- for over 60  
4 programs and their communities across New York City.  
5 An additional \$3.5 million in funding would help  
6 these programs meet increasing demands and to show  
7 our community members that their interests have been  
8 heard. Thank you for your attention.

9 TERESA BAIK: Good afternoon, Chair  
10 Encarnacion and members of the committee. My name is  
11 Teresa Baik and I'm the Director of Education at KCS.  
12 KCS is a [inaudible] nexus of services for the  
13 unde-served communities, helping them maintain their  
14 health and wellbeing. In addition, just like my  
15 colleague mentioned, KCS is a proud member of NYCCAL.  
16 For over 20 years, KCS has provided adult literacy  
17 classes through city funding. Each year, the steady  
18 increase in both our student body and the number of  
19 classes offered stands as a testament to the success  
20 of our ESOL program and the ongoing need for adult  
21 services in our communities. To best accommodate our  
student's busy schedules, we operate in-person, in  
virtual classes Monday through Saturday with flexible  
morning, afternoon, and evening sessions. The impact

of these classes can not be overstated. Our students are driven by a desire to engage deeply with their communities and neighborhoods, communicate effectively with family members, advocate for their children, particularly within the education system, ensuring they can stand up for their rights as parents, foster independence, reducing their reliance on others for daily tasks, give back through volunteering, give back through volunteering and civil participation. Your continued support has been the catalyst for these transformations, allowing our students to see truly empowered lives. In response, NYCCAL is calling on the mayor to invest \$20 million in city adult education funding stream and is also calling on the City Council to increase City Council discretionary funding. City Council discretionary funding- adult literacy funding is vital not only to KCS, but to the communities we serve, and to the 60 programs across New York City. I have seen firsthand the transformative impact of adult literacy education on our communities. It is time to show our students we have their backs, not just with words, but with the necessary increase in funding. Thank you for your attention.

MAIA DILLANE: Good afternoon, Chair

Encarnacion and members of the committee. My name is Maia Dillane. I'm Senior Director of Strategy for the Arab-American Family Support Center, known as AAFSC. AAFSC serves roughly 20,000 people each year across New York City, over 70 percent of whom were born outside the United States. Our center- our work centers families, stabilizing them through challenging time, supporting them to maintain stability and uplifting them to thrive. Over the past several months, our staff, many of whom are also immigrants, have responded to a surge in fear, need for basic assistance and mental health challenges in the communities we serve. Fear is profound. Mixed status families are increasingly choosing to self-deport rather than risk detention or separation by ICE, even those in the middle of family reunification processes. We have seen a sharp decline in community members applying for naturalization. For families traumatized by conflict in their home countries and concerned about growing conflict in the Middle East, seeking legal help can feel like an additional threat to safety. Families also face rising application fees, long wait times

1 for check-ins and court hearings, and widespread  
2 misinformation about legal rights, creating even  
3 greater fear and instability. AAFSC is a proud  
4 MOIA-established legal support center, and we create  
5 safe and supportive spaces and are a trusted resource  
6 for immigrants in a new city. We work with families  
7 who are experiencing language barriers, cultural  
8 differences and mistrust of systems that have  
9 historically targeted them. But as a result, we are  
10 over-stretched with demand far exceeding available  
11 resources. City support is critical to our work. To  
12 meet this growing demand, we respectfully requisition  
13 \$250,000 from the City Council Immigrant Opportunity  
14 Initiative to support the expansion of comprehensive  
15 Immigration legal services. In addition, we request  
16 \$325,000 in discretionary funding through the Adult  
17 Literacy Forward for AAFSC's Adult Education and  
18 Literacy program as well as \$260,000 for SNAP and  
19 health care enrollment. Thank you for your time.

20 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you very  
21 much. We'll call up the next panel. Harold Celis  
[sp?] from Make the Road, Tatiyana from the  
Children's Law Center, Joshua from Children's Law

Center, and Ernie from MFJ Legal Mobilization for Justice. Sorry. You may start.

ERNIE COLLETTE: Good afternoon. My name is Ernie Collette and I'm the Supervising Attorney of the Immigration Law Project at Mobilization for Justice. I'm here today to urge the City Council to significantly increase funding for immigrant legal services. While we applaud this council's past support, quite frankly, the legal landscape has shifted dangerously, creating an unprecedented demand for complex litigation. Despite current appeals, recent federal court and BIA decisions have effectively eliminated judicial discretion for bond and expanded the definition of those who can be detained. This combined with increased ICE enforcement means that immigrant New Yorkers are facing mandatory and definite detention. As of March 2026, over 26,000 habeas corpus petitions have been filed nationwide to challenge these unlawful detentions, while the number of people detained rose from 40,000 at the start of this administration to more than 70,000. Without increased funding to fight these unlawful detentions, our clients risk being held for years in facilities where medical neglect

and abuse are rampant. Many of our clients are afraid to go to their ICE check-in appointments or immigration court hearings, knowing that despite doing everything required of them to have their day in court, that they could now arbitrarily face detention and separation from their families. Furthermore, the DOJ has proposed a rule that would make summary dismissal the default for all- nearly all immigration appeals. Although currently in litigation, if this rule goes into effect, the BIA will no longer be a viable avenue for credible appeals. Most cases will be rubber-stamped for removal without a meaningful review of laws or facts, requiring legal services providers to pivot to petitions at the Second Circuit Court of Appeals to ensure that our clients have a fair day in court. We ask the Council to continue funding initiatives like IOI and legal services for the working poor, amongst many others, and increase funding for specific support to habeas petitions, mandamus petitions and federal appellate work. Our immigrant neighbors are working, paying taxes and contributing to our city. We must not allow their lives to be upended by a system designed to remove due process and the rule of

1 law. Thank you for your time. Thank you for  
2 allowing me to testify and for your continued  
3 commitment to all New Yorkers.

4 TATIANA WOLKOWITZ: Good afternoon, Chair  
5 Encarnacion and committee members. Thank you for the  
6 opportunity to testify today. My name is Tatiana  
7 Wolkowitz and I'm a Youth Guardianship Paralegal at  
8 the Children's Law Center, or CLC, a legal services  
9 organization in New York City that has represented  
10 over 185,000 children in child protective legal  
11 proceedings since 1997. Our driving purpose as an  
12 organization is to empower young people through legal  
13 representation and support. The mission we feel  
14 applies just as strongly to New York City's  
15 undocumented youth. As such, we are asking for  
16 continued IOI funding, specifically for our Special  
17 Immigrant Juvenile Status work. This year, CLC  
18 sought to expand our capacity to represent this  
19 demographic by creating our Youth Guardianship  
20 Program, an initiative focused solely on the  
21 representation of undocumented youth as they petition  
USCIS for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, or SIJ  
for short, in Family Court. IOI funding, we have  
represented over 150 undocumented youth in just six

months as they took the first critical step in their pursuit of legal status. As you are likely aware, congress created the SIJ designation to provide relief for young people facing desperate circumstances. Accordingly, the youth we serve are deeply vulnerable due to both their age and undocumented status, and in need of holistic representation. We are so proud to say that all of our SIJ clients have been granted both guardianship and special findings orders from the Family Court, enabling them to move forward with their immigration cases with security and legal- with the security a legal guardian provides. With the funds we receive from IOLA [sic] in 2025, CLC has been able to provide holistic legal services to our clients by hiring two designated youth guardianship paralegals, including myself, and shifting one staff attorney in to a role focused exclusively on this population. [inaudible] document drafting and hearing preparation, our team works diligently to ensure our clients feel informed, supported, and empowered. When needed, our social workers provide therapeutic support to our clients and connect their families to essential services. We



are so proud of the breadth of services we can offer our clients and have seen how impactful this work is.

JOSHUA SANTANGELO: Good afternoon. My name is Joshua Santangelo. I am the Trial Supervisor for the Youth Guardianship Program. I'm the only attorney that represents these kids with the help of my two paralegals. And while Children's Law Center has expanded our capacity to represent hundreds more children in their Family Court proceedings this year, I'm sure you're aware, SIJ applications continue to rise citywide. Our project's IOLA funding will expire at the start of July, and while we have submitted applications for renewed funding, both our projects and our clients have been holding our breath to see whether or not it will be granted. With renewed funding, our team could continue to use our expertise in Family Court to maintain a space of dignity and support immigrant youth as they seek legal status while increasing our range of holistic support for our client's emotional needs. We therefore ask most sincerely that this body continue to advocate for a new IOLA funding for this project, particularly the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Initiative, not only for Children's Law Center, but

across the nonprofit sphere to expand the impact of legal representation for hundreds more children in New York City. We work with ROCC, Legal Aid Society, Lutheran Legal Services, and ICARE who spoke earlier, to ensure that our clients are represented even after Family Court and Immigration Court and that their I360's are successfully filed. All of these organizations have depended upon the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Initiative funding to do this work, and this community of undocumented youth will be left with many fewer resources should the funding be cut. We also ask that this body consider establishing new sources of funding outside of the youth- I'm sorry- outside of the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Initiative for both legal work and social work, therapy, community center funding, and Know Your Rights campaigns, which I know this body has already passed some legislation on that front. For example, I know that this committee recently heard remarks on Know Your Rights posters being posted in multiple languages throughout the city. Our organizations came to that and commenced those efforts, and we believe that an expansion to advise about nonprofit organizations doing this kind of work

1  
2 could serve not only as reactive, but as proactive  
3 measures to ensure that these communities feel secure  
4 and have status so that they can continue to live in  
5 a secure atmosphere. We thank you for the  
6 opportunity to contribute to your decision-making and  
7 to highlight our work, and we applaud your efforts  
8 and look forward to what this committee is going to  
9 continue to do. Thank you.

10 HAROLD SOLIS: Good afternoon. My name  
11 Harold Solis. I'm the Co-Legal Director of Make the  
12 Road New York. Make the Road serves 30,000 immigrant  
13 New Yorkers and working-class New Yorkers every year  
14 through our wraparound services. Out of our offices  
15 in Bushwick, Staten Island, places like Long Island  
16 and Westchester, we help individuals with all sorts  
17 of needs that they're facing on a daily basis. I'm  
18 here because I want to continue to talk about this  
19 topic that has rightfully so taken up so much time  
20 for the committee today, which is that as you all  
21 know, New Yorkers are living through a relentless and  
new chapter of immigration enforcement. Day after  
day, immigrant New Yorkers are watching loved ones  
being taken away. Last year, many of them were being  
taken away from Immigration Courthouse, but as we

have seen in the last few months, so many individuals now are being arrested and detained for going about their daily lives in the public streets of New York. RLC, the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative of which Make the Road is a part, has played a critical role in fighting back some of the most unprecedented and aggressive ICE enforcement tactics over the last year. Much of the work that we have been able to do has been in large part thanks to the leadership and support of the City Council. We have been there. We play a critical role in the city's response. We have a centralized system, and it's through that system that we have been there every time that ICE has taken a loved one at Immigration Court. Last year, when they decided to take a blind man out of Queens just because of the way he looked, it was the RLC that was there in court fighting to secure his release through habeas litigation. When ICE first announced their unprecedented policy of ensuring that most New Yorkers would have to face mandatory detention, it was Make the Road that was there through the RLC last summer that fought back against that unprecedented and aggressive change in policy. We hope and believe that the City Council should continue to build off

the trust and investment that it has made in the RLC, particularly now as we face an unprecedented and evolving landscape around immigration enforcement in New York. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

Calling up the next panel. [inaudible] Mohamad from ACT, Zeinab Eyega, Leidis De La Rosa, Carolina Moreno, and Van Xelo from Mixteca as well. The Mixteca panel. Alrighty, we can begin. Make sure you press the- yeah.

ZEINAB EYEGA: Good afternoon. Thank you so much for having me. My name is Zeinab Eyega. I'm the Executive Director of Sauti Yetu Center for African Women. We're actually located in your district. It's good to see you. And today I'd like to spend a few minutes to talk about our work. Sauti Yetu is a 20-year-old social service organization working with African immigrant women and families in the Bronx, although we serve across the city. Across our four programs we serve over 1,200 women and children a year, providing services in at least 15 different African languages, excluding French, Arabic and Spanish. And today, I'm here to ask for support from the City Council, because for the past three

years we have not received any City Council funding, and we've not been able to find out why, although we've applied several times for the past three years. And as all of you know, African immigrants and Black immigrants in particular are the highest group of immigrant populations that are deported easily. They're also the group of immigrants who actually have the least legal representation, and we know that because we actually spend a lot of hours every day trying to find attorneys for our survivors, especially our DV survivors and especially our, you know, family members who want representation in Immigration Court. And every time, either when they get a case to be taken, they wait- they wait for three months, six months before that. The minute we know that they get picked up on the street and they're quickly deported. So the highest number of deportees, you may not know that in the media, but it's actually Black immigrants in New York City. so I'm here to say first of all thank you for the City Council for having this hearing today, and thank you for your investment in immigrant resources to support immigrant New Yorkers, but I'm also here to ask that

please support Sauti Yetu Center for African Women.

Thank you.

LEIDIS DE LA ROSA: Hello. Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion and members of the committee. My name Leidis De La Rosa and I'm the Advocacy Coordinator at La Colmena in Staten Island. Our mission is to empower immigrant workers through organizing, education, culture, and equitable economic development. We'll work to ensure that the immigrant community and workers not only survive in New York City, but also thrive. Our work reveals a simple truth: immigrants are essential to New York City's economy and culture of life. Yet, too often they face barriers to safe, stable, well-paid work, as well as limited access to legal support that they need. By investing in immigrant worker safety, the City Council strengthens not only individual families, but entire communities. This investment moves us towards a more inclusive and equitable future for New York City. La Colmena is a proud member of the DLWI [sic] Coalition that works with laborers and the New York City Coalition for domestic workers, as well as many other initiatives, and we have applied for citywide discretionary funding and

1 are asking the Council to continue supporting our  
2 work in the immigrant community in Staten Island  
3 where we have become a beacon of hope. We continue  
4 to provide Know Your Rights trainings and critical  
5 education to our community, but at the same time the  
6 need for legal services has increased significantly  
7 as more of our community members face kidnappings and  
8 detentions by ICE. We ask for increased funding to  
9 ensure universal access to legal representation for  
10 immigrant New Yorkers, because when our communities  
11 feel safe and supported, they are able to contribute  
12 to New York City to grow and to flourish. We also  
13 need continued investment to ensure domestic workers  
14 are safe in their workplaces to prevent wage theft  
15 and workplace injuries and to guarantee fair pay and  
16 safe working conditions. Thank you for the  
17 opportunity to testify again today and for your  
18 continued commitment to supporting immigrant  
19 communities across New York City.

17 CAROLINA MORENO: Hello. My name is  
18 Carolina Moreno and I am a community advocate at  
19 Mixteca. Mixteca is a nonprofit organization located  
20 in Sunset Park that has provided services to Latinx  
21 and indigenous communities for many years. I am here



today to share the story of a community member who authorized me to share her testimony. "Hello. I am Maria and I am a community member of Mixteca. I am originally from Puebla, Mexico, and have lived in Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York for 19 years. I truly love my neighborhood. At one point I needed to see a doctor, but I did not have health insurance due to my immigration status. Someone recommend me that I visit Mixteca, and I was so grateful I did. When I arrive at their offices, I received all the information I needed to access medical care. I felt at home. Everyone spoke to me in my own language, which made everything much easier. During the pandemic, Mixteca was the helping hand that the entire Hispanic community needed. From day one they were there for us. I remember seeing long lines of people waiting for a bag of food, and I was one of them. Mixteca brought joy to my Thanksgiving table with a large turkey. In 2025, while going through a very difficult time, I came across a post on Mixteca's social media about the program called Sobremesa, and I decided to attend. To my surprise I found a strong support network of incredible women. I received emotional and even

1 financial support. I was also able to access  
2 counselor services at their offices which saved me a  
3 lot of time. Additionally, the English and computer  
4 classes offered have been incredibly beneficial for  
5 me. After completing Sobremesa program, I was able to  
6 take on meaningful projects that have positively  
7 impacted my life. I currently continue to receive  
8 emotional support." Thank you.

9 VAN XELO: Hello. My name is Van and I'm  
10 the community organizer at Mixteca. As a  
11 community-based organization that provides legal and  
12 social services. We hear daily from our community  
13 members how it impacts them on their daily lives. I  
14 would also like to share a personal statement from a  
15 community member at Mixteca. "Hello, my name is Luz  
16 [sp?]. I am an asylum-seeker. Due to difficult life  
17 circumstances, I was forced to leave my home country  
18 following the loss of my only brother, a tragedy  
19 caused by the crime and terror generated by violent  
20 groups. This situation left a profound mark on my  
21 life and compelled me to seek a new beginning far  
from my homeland. Arriving in Florida knowing no  
one, I settled there alongside my husband. We lived  
there for a year during which time our baby was born,

a little one who arrived to fill our lives with hope and joy. However, our entire immigration case was filed in that state. Nine months ago we moved to New York, and through various means, we attempted to request a change of venue for our court case as we lacked the necessary resources to travel all the way back to Florida. Along the way, we encountered numerous difficulties and unfavorable experiences like limited access to health services and food when my family needed it the most. It was then that someone share the contact information for the Mixteca organization with me, assuring me that they would be able to provide guidance. When I reached out, I was assisted by a woman who was kind and listened to me throughout the preparation and submission of my documents. Thanks to her support and the assistance of the organization, my request for a change of venue was finally approved. This achievement has brought immense relief to both me and my family. I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the organization and to every single person who with a smile offered me their support and made me feel accompanied and truly at home." This story, like many others, is why the city should continue to fund and allocate as many

resources as possible towards legal and social services for our immigrant communities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you so much. I want to get your contact information. I'd like to call up now Carina Gutierrez from the Street Vendor Project, Ligia Guallpa from Worker's Justice Project, and Alejandro also from the Worker's Justice Project panel. I'm going to start naming these panels. Okay? Yep.

LIGIA GUALLPA: Yep. Hi. So, good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion and members of this committee. My name is Ligia Guallpa. I'm the Executive Director of the Worker's Justice Project which is a worker's rights organization that has been organizing delivery workers, day laborers, and domestic workers for the past 16 years. And most recently, we're proud to be organizing and passing legislation to make sure that 80,000 app delivery workers have labor rights for the City of New York. and I'm here today specifically to talk about the importance of supporting key initiatives that sustains our work. One of them is day laborers, domestic workers, and we run key programs that are related with worker's rights, workforce development,

1 training, which are opportunities for workers to get  
2 pathway for living wage jobs, but also to fight  
3 injustices in the workplace. In the past year, we  
4 have recovered more than \$20 million just for app  
5 delivery workers. I know Alejandro is going to talk  
6 about one of the worker's rights programs that has  
7 recovered \$124,000 for day laborers and domestic  
8 workers. We have generated more than 600 jobs with  
9 the average minimum wage of \$25 an hour. And the  
10 reason I'm here is because we want to ask for key  
11 support. One of them is a creation of a new work  
12 organizing initiative that we're launching with the  
13 Street Vendor's Drum [sic] to invest \$5 million in  
14 worker organizing. Also support for the Day Laborer  
15 Workforce Initiative. My other colleagues were  
16 asking for \$4.9 for five worker centers to sustain  
17 the Worker's Rights Program. And also our  
18 construction site safety training program. You will  
19 hear more from our members who are directly impacted  
20 and also our organizers who are on the front lines  
21 building worker power.

ALEJANDRO GRAJALES: Good afternoon,  
Chair Elsie Encarnacion [inaudible] the committee.  
Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is

Alejandro Grajales. I'm a worker leader and worker [inaudible] organizer at the Workers' Justice Project. I'm here to lift up immigrant New Yorkers, day laborers, domestic workers, and delivery workers who keep our city running but are too often underpaid, exploited, and unprotected. I want to begin by sharing my story. I came to New York as an immigrant and I spend many years working in restaurant on delivery. ICE beatings, wage theft, [inaudible] like so many in my community. I live in fear of speaking out because of my immigrant status. I know what I feel like just anxiety. [inaudible] wrong, but changed it when I joined to Worker Justice Project. I can began organizing with Los Deliveristas Unidos and today I'm proud to serve as a worker's right organizer, helping our workers find the most [inaudible] employment exploiting the current anti-immigrant climate [sic]. They feel empowered to steal wages and threaten workers to report to immigration to keep our communities silent. This really is real [inaudible] release our power. Through Worker's Justice Project we are changing the story. We show workers they [inaudible] alone, that they have rights and that when we organize together,

1 we can win. In [inaudible] months we have recovered  
2 \$125,000 in [inaudible] wages for day laborers.

3 Domestic workers and [inaudible] processing workers.

4 [inaudible] anybody [inaudible] over \$20 million in

5 wages from delivery companies, but are forced to

6 comply with minimum pay loads [sic]. We are also

7 creating safer workplaces. We house [inaudible] as

8 certification for workers, threatening with

9 deportation or who have experienced workplace

10 violence, giving up protection for a part. None of

11 these [inaudible] support of the City Council and the

12 families that make these programs special. Thank

13 you.

14 CARINA KAUFMAN-GUTIERREZ: Hi. Good

15 afternoon. Thank you, Chair Encarnacion and your

16 amazing team for the opportunity to testify. My name

17 is Carolina Kaufman-Gutierrez and I'm the Co-Director

18 at the Street Vendor Project. As the only

19 organization that exclusively serves street vendors

20 in New York City, SVP is the centralized hub for this

21 underserved population, providing critical small

business and legal services since 2001. We

respectfully request support from the City Council to

sustain and expand our essential Know Your Rights

education for Immigrant Street Vendors Initiative.

As a growing workforce of more than 23,000

entrepreneurs making a living from the streets and

sidewalk, 96 percent of street vendors are

immigrants, 81 percent vend as their main source of

income, and 65 percent live in a household with one

or more children. So, truly are the caretakers of

their families. With the Council support, we've

created vendor-specific Know Your Rights with

immigration materials in seven languages and our team

distributes these resources to street vendors through

weekly outreach to vendor carts, to their trucks, to

commissary garages, to vendor hubs across the city.

Last year, we went to 144 zip codes. To equip vendors

with the tools they need to protect themselves while

vending in public space should they have an

interaction with an immigration enforcement agent

while also connecting them with legal resources and

emergency family planning kits. We distribute

whistles so vendors can warn each other when ICE is

in the area. We add vendors to language-based text

chats so they can share and receive on-the-ground

update as well. And our model prioritizes one-on-one

conversations with vendors so they can too share out



1 that information to their customers. Because we are  
2 membership-based, when we also work with vendors,  
3 we're engaging them. We're collecting emergency  
4 contact information should a situation arise. And  
5 just to give an example of this practice and work:  
6 two weeks ago one of our member leaders was detained  
7 by ICE on a Friday around 10:00 p.m. She had my  
8 phone number memorized. She called from detention,  
9 because we had her emergency contact information we  
10 could call her family. We could connect her to legal  
11 resources. We had her medications on file. She  
12 didn't sign any paperwork. She knew her rights, and  
13 remained silent in that situation. So, thank you for  
14 your support to continue.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you so  
16 much. And also I'm just going to make a plug for our  
17 next hearing that'll be in conjunction with the Small  
18 Business committee. So, we'll see you there, all of  
19 you. I'm going to call up now Maria Marcia [sp?],  
20 from Worker's Justice Project, Alfredo [sp?] from the  
21 Worker's Justice Project, [inaudible] Diaz from the  
Worker's Justice Project, Maria from the Worker's  
Justice Project. Okay. When you're ready you can  
begin.

DELSA DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story. My name is Delsa Diaz [sp?]. I am from Columbia and I'm here as an immigrant worker in New York City. I work for a company called [inaudible] 4805 in Borough Park, Brooklyn where I experience very difficult working conditions. We work under constant pressure without proper time to rest or eat and an environment where our rights were not respected. I even saw minors being exposed to these conditions. Despite all the efforts, many times we were not paid for our work, and when I decided to ask for my wages, instead of being paid I was fired. I know they took advantage of me for being an immigrant, and because of the fear of many- that many of us feel, a lot of times that we don't have rights. I reached out to Worker's Justice Project where for the first time I understood that we do have rights, no matter where we come from or what language we speak. With their support I was able to raise my voice and take action. I'm still in that process today, waiting for justice for the work I did. But I'm not here only for myself. I'm here for

1 many others who the same thing every day- who go  
2 through the same thing every day and are still afraid  
3 to speak up. We are not alone. Worker's Justice  
4 Project is the only place where immigrant workers can  
5 find support, guidance, accompaniment [sic], and  
6 strength to defend our rights. That is why today I  
7 ask you to approve and continue strengthening funding  
8 for this work so more workers can access help, learn  
9 their rights, and not have to face these situations  
10 alone. Supporting these programs is not just an  
11 option, it is an investment in the dignity, justice,  
12 and well-being of an entire community. Thank you  
13 very much.

14 MARIA GUIRACOCHA: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon all of whom  
16 are present. Thank you very much for the opportunity  
17 to speak. My name is Maria Guiracocha. I am from  
18 Ecuador. I'm the leader [sic] and the head of my  
19 household. I have three children who depend entirely  
20 on me. Since I arrived in this country I have worked  
21 [inaudible] I have looked for work day-by-day,  
working construction in [inaudible] difficult and  
physically demanding jobs. It is not easy, but I do  
it because everything for my children depends on it,

the rent, the food, and their future. In my most recent job with a company called Cleaning Past [sic], I was led to believe I would have a stable opportunity. I was asked to buy my own materials and tools and went into debt to be able to work, trusting a promise. But the reality was very different. After several weeks of working when I asked to be paid, instead of [inaudible] my wages, I was blocked from the platform. I was left without work, without pay and with debt. It was a very unfair and painful situation, but I was not alone. I was not left alone. Thanks to the support of Worker's Justice Project I was able not only to report my case, but they also helped organize 13 other coworkers who went through the same situation. For this collective effort, the District Attorney's office was able to arrest the person responsible in North Carolina, extradite him to New York, and he has now been found guilty of [inaudible] criminal charges. His sentencing will take place next month. None of this would have been possible without the support of Worker's Justice Project, and I'm here today because this is not just my story. It is a reality that many workers in this city face where abuse continues to

TRANSLATOR: Good- can you hear me?

Okay. Good afternoon members of the Immigration Committee. My name is Willfredo Villatoro. I am a construction worker and a member of the Workplace Justice Project. I came to New York City from Honduras and have worked in the construction industry for the past 18 years. I currently work as a painter. In this industry we often face unsafe working conditions due to a lack of information and training. This puts our health, our safety and even our lives at risk. Many times because of fear related to our immigration status or employer abuse, we do not report these situations. Personally, I have been a victim of wage theft and delayed payments. However, thanks to organizations like the Workplace Justice Project, workers receive guidance and training on

1 essential issues. We are provided with important  
2 trainings such as classes [inaudible] health and  
3 safety certifications like OSHA as well as support in  
4 cases of wage theft, among many other benefits,  
5 simply by being members of the program. As immigrant  
6 workers, we have always had concerned about our  
7 rights. For a long time I believed that because I  
8 was an immigrant I had no rights which made me live  
9 with fear and insecurity, especially at work. But  
10 thanks to programs like this, we are now informed  
11 about our rights and how to respond in different  
12 situations, always in accordance with the law. For  
13 this reason, I respectfully ask the Council to  
14 continue funding programs such as construction safety  
15 training, the Day Labor Workforce Initiative and the  
16 Worker Rights Education and Organizing initiative.  
17 These programs strengthen New York's workforce and  
18 defend the dignity of immigrant workers. Construction  
19 workers like me take pride in our work and ask that  
20 the city continue investing in our safety, our rights  
21 and our future. Thank you very much for listening  
and for supporting immigrant workers.

MARIA: [speaking Spanish]

TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon distinguished members of the committee. My name is Maria [inaudible] I'm a construction and cleaning worker and a member of the Worker's Justice Project. I came to New York from Ecuador several years ago with the same intention of building a better future for my family. At first, working in construction and cleaning was extremely difficult, low wages, exhausting hours, and great instability. I often worried about not being able to cover basic needs like many immigrant workers. I felt fear, fear of losing my job, of being replaced, and fear of the consequences of my immigration status. Things changed when I joined the Worker's Justice Project. Thanks to their support I have been able to find occasional jobs that supplement my income. Those jobs have allowed me to pay my bills, feed my family and have a little stability. In addition, the workplace safety training I have has empowered me. I know now how to protect myself and demand fair treatment. The impact of this community has given me confidence. I no longer feel alone. I know that together we can build a more just city. That's why I ask the Council to continue supporting programs like

the Worker Employment initiative, legal services for domestic workers, and the Labor Rights initiative.

Workers like me sustain the daily life of this city.

We deserve respect, opportunities, and a dignified

future. Thank you for your attention and support.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

[speaking Spanish] I'm calling in the next round of

folks. So we have Ricxu Bacus, from the Worker Corp

Business Development Initiative, Jennifer from NYMIC

[sp?], Jesenia, also NMIC, Cha Cha Wang [sp?], Church

World Service New York- repeat. Hello, hello. Four.

Thank you.

RICXU BACUS: Good afternoon and thank

you Committee Chair Encarnacion and members of the

Committee. I'm Ricxu Bacus. I'm a senior attorney in

residence at CUNY Law's Community and Economic

Development Clinic, or we CED Clinic in short. And

I'm solidarity with worker leaders and worker

cooperatives, members of the network of partners that

formed the Worker Cooperative Business Development

Initiative, and the New York City Network for Worker

Cooperatives, or NYC NOWC. So, we believe that

working people of New York have the capacity to

thrive and support their communities. If only we can



dismantle or diminish the structural barrier and inequalities that they face. Immigrant workers in particular are more vulnerable in the endeavor for New Yorkers to have a dignified life. Worker cooperatives have been a means to help immigrant workers and other workers increase their average pay rate, set better conditions of employment, and boost security- boost their security. Worker owners, worker cooperatives in New York City are overwhelmingly women, immigrant, and BIPOC workers. With the small business loans that- small business loans being restricted now to only citizens and nationals of the United States. WCBDI is possibly the most inclusive small business program, inclusive of all business owners and centering the needs of immigrant small business owners under the small business services program. We, CUNY Law, specifically has provided for immigrant workers and worker owners in unprecedented place given the current political situation you heard a lot about. For example, many of the immigrant workers and worker owners fear for their personally identifying information with the expansion on requests for different data and personal identifying information. And so we- in that- the fear there is

1 that they are afraid that their immigration status,  
2 gender identity, and other information would be outed  
3 and used against them and use- we help them mitigate  
4 those dangers through information. Another thing that  
5 people don't think about is tariffs and how that  
6 impacted immigrants, and we also work with them to  
7 field questions and help mitigate the effects and  
8 impacts of tariffs in their lives and in their  
9 businesses. CEB clinic also has a body of New  
10 Yorkers that are from directly impacted communities.  
11 I'm an immigrant from the Philippines. My mom's a  
12 retired nurse. I'm a graduate of a New York City  
13 public school and a practitioner now at CUNY Law, and  
14 we can build this bench [sic]. Supporting CED Clinic  
15 is also supporting for more advocates for immigrants  
16 in New York, and we ask that you increase the funding  
17 for WCBIs to \$5,097,082 and specifically for CED  
18 clinic at \$340,000. Thank you so much.

16 JENNIFER ARGUETA: Good afternoon, Chair  
17 Encarnacion and committee members. My name is  
18 Jennifer Argueta, the Senior Adult Education Program  
19 Manager at NMIC. Our programs provide over 500  
20 members of the community with preparation for high  
21 school equivalency exams, English language skills and

the associated wraparound services necessary to establish secure and prosperous futures. Our core catchment area is upper Manhattan and the adjacent Bronx neighborhoods. The clients we serve are nearly 100 percent low income, 70 percent are foreign-born, and 58 percent speak Spanish as their primary language. NMIC has two active adult literacy contracts with DYCD which provides for a total of two fulltime staff to support all program intake, case management, data entry, and reporting across both contracts. This is simply insufficient to address the over 1,500 program applications we receive annually or provide any meaningful case management to our enrolled clients. The Adult Literacy Forward Initiative will support nearly 400 additional instructional hours across NMIC's programs. It is also an essential supplement to NMIC's DYCD contracted literacy programs. This funding allows us to hire a part-time intake specialist and supports two full-time case managers dedicated to adult education clients. In FY 26 our case managers help clients access child care, food pantry, immigration services, employment, training, and mental health services. As our community faces cuts in services

1 and attacks from the federal government, the work of  
2 our case managers is more essential than ever. While  
3 we are proud of our accomplishments, we need- the  
4 need in our community remains high. To support our  
5 ongoing NMIC- our ongoing work, NMIC requests a  
6 renewal in FY27 of our \$240,000 Adult Literacy  
7 Forward allocation. We also ask the City Council  
8 consider increasing total city discretionary funding  
9 for adult literacy education from \$14.5 million to  
10 \$18 million and consolidate the two current council  
11 discretionary initiatives for adult literacy under  
12 Adult Literacy Forward. An increase of \$3.5 million  
13 would enable the 63 programs that currently receive  
14 funding to serve thousands more adults in need.  
15 Thank you again for your time and your support.

14 CHIA CHIA WANG: Hi, thank you so much  
15 for having us. And I'm really glad to be providing  
16 our testimony. Thank you, honorable Chair and  
17 committee members. My name is Chia Chia Wang I am  
18 the New York Site Director for Church World Service.  
19 I am also proud resident of Queens for the last 24  
20 years. Church World Service is global humanitarian  
21 agency dedicated in transforming communities around  
the world through just and sustainable rpsosnes to

hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster since 1946. Church World Service New York was formally established in 2023. To me the growing needs arising from human migration and family reunification. In our first four years we serve over 1,200 refugees and unaccompanied children, Ukrainian, Afghan refugees and then Haitian entrants through legal services and case management. As we both witness and directly impacted by the drastic changes in federal funding and policies, our work serving refugees and migrants who fled violence and poverty for better lives in New York has also been significantly impacted. We ask the City Council to support our work and also to better understand the refugee resettlement model. Refugee resettlement is a proven and successful model with over 40 years of impact. It is built on advance planning, formal [sic] assessment and time-bound, yet extremely efficient system that ensured that all new arrivals have access to everything they need. The model is culturally competent, trauma-informed and highly accountable. It also identifies key stakeholders and actively encourage community partnership. Just one last thing. Our five resettlement agencies have jointly submitted proposal

1  
2 to utilize this resettlement model to continue to  
3 serve our clients and that is called the New York  
4 City, NYCIRI- that you have heard of that, the New  
5 York City Immigrant and Refugee Initiative. Thank  
6 you so much. [inaudible] together with me is my  
7 colleague who serve unaccompanied children and we  
8 have testified in our last hearing. Do you want to  
9 say-

10 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah. Thank you, Chair  
11 Elsie Encarnacion and members of the committee. I  
12 currently work as a paralegal and provide legal  
13 services to our facilities. [inaudible] LTFC [sic].  
14 We provide emergency services to unaccompanied  
15 minors. These minors are coming from Guatemala, El  
16 Salvador, Nicaragua, Central America, and they're  
17 going through a lot of hardship. Well, they're going  
18 through hardship. These minors are going through  
19 extreme vulnerability, even more because they speak  
20 indigenous languages like Ketchi [sp?], Ketchi Kel  
21 [sp?], [inaudible] alto, [inaudible] other indigenous  
languages. Also there's keeping from criminal  
organizations that are actually subjecting them to  
join to their criminal organizations such as the  
cartel [inaudible] Sinaloa in Mexico and other

1 criminal organizations in Latin America. So, we're  
2 helping these minors escaping from this reality, and  
3 it's more important now than ever to help them  
4 navigate through this legal [inaudible] here in the  
5 US, because otherwise they're going to face  
6 deportation and go back to their countries which  
7 they're facing real hardship. Even yesterday I was  
8 talking with one of the minors, and she's actually 13  
9 years old, and she thought that it was okay getting  
10 married at that age. That's not only case. There's  
11 many minors that are going through the same  
12 situation. It's really [inaudible] really stressing  
13 that we cannot provide these legal services under  
14 this current administration. So, I thank the  
15 committee for supporting us and keep supporting our  
16 mission. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you very  
16 much for sharing. I'm going to call up the next  
17 panel. This is our last in-person panel, I believe.  
18 So, thank you all for making it this long with us.  
19 We have Amadou Ly from- I see you. I see you, Amadou.  
20 Dmitri Daniel from Russian Speaking Community  
21 Council, and Anh-Thu Nguyen-- you guys, I'm going to

get better, I swear- from Democracy At Work  
Institute.

AMADOU LY: Alright, thank you so much  
for this opportunity, Chair Encarnacion, committee  
and finance analyst. My name is Amadou Ly. I'm the  
founder of the Amadou Ly Foundation, and I'm here to  
speak about an urgent issue that we're dealing with,  
keeping families together. In New York City,  
immigrant families are being torn apart. Parents are  
detained, transferred to distant centers within hours  
before they can contact loved ones or access to legal  
help. African asylum-seekers face an even greater  
crisis. At 26 Federal Plaza, ICE officers often seem  
happy to see them, because most are single Black men  
or women with no legal representation and no legal  
guidance, the men and women who are mostly  
vulnerable, the least supported and too often left to  
navigate an impossible system alone. Street vending-  
street vendors face another form of injustice. Intro  
47 decriminalize minor food violations which is  
amazing, but vendors selling counterfeit goods were  
excluded in that. One might think that if we  
decriminalize food vending, we could also extend the  
same protection to these counterfeit violators. We



1 are on the ground every day working directly with  
2 families and we file habeas petitions within minutes  
3 of dissension. On Christmas Even we secured the  
4 release of Abu Tal [sp?], a Canal Street vendor,  
5 reunited him with his family. Another case we had was  
6 Andrew Garcia, a husband and father who was  
7 apprehended while checking in to remove his ankle  
8 monitor. His wife called us sobbing. Working with  
9 our partners we filed a habeas petition and within  
10 weeks, he was back with his family. And it breaks my  
11 heart because literally as I'm sitting there I  
12 received more than 16 calls from different detainees  
13 that we cannot help because we simply do not have the  
14 support that we need. This is the reality. You know,  
15 lives are on the line. Families are suffering and  
16 time is not on our side. I would love to have the  
17 Council to support our initiatives without going  
18 further. Thank you so much.

16 DMITRI GLINSKI: Okay. Do you hear me?  
17 Okay. Good afternoon. I'm Dmitri Glinski here on  
18 behalf of RCC that my colleagues and I cofounded 15  
19 years ago, based in Washington Heights. We worked  
20 across the city and beyond organizing our diverse  
21 interfaith and multi-ethnic people from former Soviet

countries, advocating for them from Community Board all the way to the United Nations, providing lawyers and pro se aide, Know Your Rights training, MOIA English classes and other services that depend on whenever we are able to break through our community's systemic inclusion from funding. I'm here to urge to advance in this budget our city's values of equity and fairness in relation to refugees and in fact refugees from Ukraine, Russia and the region. Since [inaudible] Russian speakers have been the third-largest linguistic minority in our city for decades, the third-largest, over two percent of the city population, and yet they and others from my part of the world are very underserved. The lack of Russian or Ukrainian interpreters here year after year is just a symptom and not represented in contracts with diaspora CBOs. Since the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, thousands of Ukrainian refugees and Russian anti-war asylum-seekers came here. Yet, in these four years, not one of the CBOs got any support from our city or at least the \$100K [sic] subcontract from any of the large social service providers with up to \$14 million in city contracts per year while our clients report not being

able to get any services from those large providers in Russian or Ukrainian. While our asylum-seekers are being deported straight into the hands of the persecutors, New York-based business partners and promoters [inaudible] in Russia that is the root cause of this migration- are wielding influence here on both sides of the aisle, making use of their super profits in real estate and on Wall Street, and using their power and influence to silence refugees and exiles for speaking inconvenient truths about them and to block their CBOs from public and private funding. So, with deservedly high hopes for our new Mayor, Speaker, and Committee Chair- congratulations by the way- others newly electeds lecturing you on the promise of equity for all. My three asks for the committee are, one, give budgetary incentives for large service providers to offer capacity building subcontracts to small CBOs from severely underfunded diasporas like ours. Two, set up a truly representative council of immigrant-led CBOs under City Council. Three, given the scale of influx from my part of the world caused by war and political persecution which has not been reflected in city funding, hold hearings on the situation of refugees

and [inaudible] refugees from Ukraine and Russia.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you.

ANH-THU NGUYEN: Good afternoon, Chair Encarnacion, members of the Committee on Small Business. My name is Anh-Thu Nguyen. I'm the Director of Strategic Partnerships at Democracy at Work Institute, one of the 13 members of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative. And thanks to y'all's support over the last 11 cycles and now, we've been able to provide critical support especially to immigrant workers and recent migrants. As you know, 50 percent of small businesses in New York City are owned by immigrants. And in addition to all the other attacks on immigrant communities, small business owners who do not have citizenship now do not receive any support from SBA. SBA loans have been cut. Federal support has been cut, and a lot of the work is now at the city level. And what makes our work unique as my colleague Ricxu from CUNY Law has previously stated is that our initiative which is under Department of Small Business Services is likely the most inclusive business support service in the city. For all immigrants, censuring immigrants

1 regardless of status as well others who are excluded  
2 from our economy. So, just a few of the key  
3 achievements in the last few years using our Council  
4 funds for WCBDI has included the successful  
5 incubation of Afro-Lingual [sic] which is a worker  
6 cooperative that offers language assistance and  
7 support in over 10 African languages. We've been  
8 able to work and partner with CUNY's Office of  
9 Undocumented and Immigrant Student Programs, the John  
10 Jay College Immigrant Student Success Center, and the  
11 Institute for Mexican Studies at Lehman College to  
12 create pathways for immigrant students and graduates  
13 for their careers. We've also launched a rapid  
14 response cooperative toolkit for CBOs available in  
15 English and Spanish so that they can become community  
16 incubators of businesses. The vast majority of  
17 worker owners in New York City are in low-wage,  
18 high-disparity and violation industries such as child  
19 care and home care, and that's the area that we focus  
20 on. So we hope that City Council in the next year  
21 will continue investing in worker cooperatives in New  
York City through enhancing WCBDI to \$5.09 million  
for fiscal year 27. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. I am now going to- we are finished with our in-person panel which is like great. Thank you all for staying this long. We do have a panel that is online, and we will get to them, but we are going to take a quick break. I do want to take a moment to thank a few other folks who have worked so hard on putting this- the committee work together, Richard Yates Wong [sp?], Harani Taramula [sp?]- Tiramala- Lindsey Wheeler [sp?], and AJ Pascal [sp?]. Thank you so much for all of your work on this committee. We will be back in about five, ten minutes to finish with our online panel.

[break]

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Hello everyone, and welcome back. We will now turn to virtual panelists. For virtual panelists, once your name is called a member of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will set the timer and give you the go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may begin before delivering your testimony. Now I will call on our first virtual panelist, Henry Laraja.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Henry, if you are speaking, we cannot hear you. So can you mute and unmute again just to make sure we can-

HENRY LARAJA: Okay. can you hear me now?

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Ys.

HENRY LARAJA: Okay, great. Alright, well, good afternoon to all present. My name is Henry Laraja. I'm the accredited representative with Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, or YMPJ. YMPJ is a community-based organization founded in 1994. We're located in the southeast Bronx, covering Bronx River, Soundview, Bruckner, and Park Chester community. Presently, we are the only DOJ-recognized site in the 10472 zip code, and we're five miles away from the next recognized site. Our immigration services not only assist the Bronx community, but accommodate all metro New York. We serve a diverse population, covering all portions of our globe from east to west, north to south. We cover it all. Since 2006 we have guided our immigrant community through the complex world of immigration. We provide in-depth consultations to evaluate the situation and we file pertinent applications like naturalization,

1 family reunification, adjustment of status, DACA, and  
2 much more, all which help achieve the American dream.  
3 We also serve as liaisons between government and  
4 state agencies, USCIS, NVC, and the US Embassies  
5 abroad. We're made up of only one DOJ accredited  
6 representative, and we have one on-call attorney.  
7 Since our start we've seen thousands of clients and  
8 help save thousands of dollars in attorney's fees.  
9 We've also deterred our community from the services  
10 of predatory [inaudible]. In 2016, YMPJ helped form  
11 the Bronx Immigration Partnership, that's BIP. BIP  
12 is a group of Bronx-based legal service providers who  
13 address immigration issues. We support our  
14 community-

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time  
14 expired.

15 HENRY LAJARA: Okay. We provide legal  
16 services. Our services are all free and confidential.  
17 We thank you for your continued support. That's why  
18 we ask for- that you recognize that these feats  
19 require further assistance. Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you,  
20 Henry. I'd like to now call on Arlette Cepeda.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.  
21



ARLETTE CEPEDA: Hello. Thank you so much, Chair Encarnacion. I really appreciate the time and your commitment for supporting immigrant communities in New York City. My name is Arlette Cepeda. I'm the Interim Executive Director of La Colmena, and we are a worker-center located in Staten Island focused on empowering immigrant workers and their families through education, organizing, culture, and economic development. La Colmena has been a reliable partner to a number of city agencies including MOIA in making sure that the most vulnerable populations can access the city services and resources they deserve. This work is only possible thanks to the Speaker's citywide initiatives and the support of many Council Member initiatives that address the needs of immigrant New Yorkers. We ask the Oversight Committee to make sure that La Colmena continues to receive the funding that covers the support for immigrant communities in Staten Island. We seek to support this vital work, and we need funding for the following initiatives: the Day Laborer initiative, Domestic Workers Empowerment initiative, the Community Interpreter Bank, the Culturally Specific Gender-based Violence initiative,

1 the food pantry, the Legal Services for Day Laborers  
2 and Domestic Workers, the Culture and Digital  
3 Literacy Support among others initiatives that are  
4 supported by the Council. Our organization is a  
5 trusted help for immigrant communities in Staten  
6 Island. It's mostly forgotten, so we want to make  
7 sure that we're not forgotten. So, the funding for  
8 these initiative are utmost importance during this  
9 time that immigrant communities are being terrorized  
10 by the current immigration enforcement tactics by the  
11 federal government. So, I thank you so much for your  
12 continued support and we look forward to partnering  
13 with City Council to support immigrant New Yorkers.  
14 Thank you so much for the opportunity.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you so  
16 very much. I'm now calling on Edmond Loi.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

18 EDMOND LOI: Good afternoon, Chair  
19 Encarnacion and members of the Committee on  
20 Immigration. My name is Edmond Loi, and I'm  
21 testifying on behalf of the Charles B. Wang Community  
Health Center. We are a federally-qualified health  
center with locations in Chinatown and Flushing. In  
2024, we served over 65,000 patients. The

overwhelming majority of our patients are limited English-proficient and low-income with 60 percent of our patients being uninsured or relying on Medicaid coverage. Like many immigrant serving organizations around the country as you've heard from today, we're facing funding cuts. Continued support through City Council discretionary funding is critical to ensuring that we can remain open and continue to serve our communities. Through the Immigrant Health Initiative we provide culturally responsive and linguistically accessible health services to immigrant populations all across New York City with a particular focus on Asian immigrants. Our services include free health screenings such as blood pressure, bone density and BMI checks, as well as essential vaccinations for Influenza and COVID-19. We also provide multilingual health education through radio, television, social media, and community workshops to promote preventative care and help individuals navigate the health care system. We all know it's difficult enough to access health care in English, but for many non-English-speaking immigrants, accessing health care is overwhelming due to the language and cultural barriers. CBWCHC is a trusted resource where AAPI

1 patients can receive care and information in a  
2 language and setting that feels familiar to them.  
3 Continued funding for the Immigrant Health Initiative  
4 is essential to addressing health disparities and  
5 ensuring that there's equitable access to care for  
6 immigrant New Yorkers. Thank you for your time and  
7 consideration and for your continued support of  
8 immigrant health. I'm happy to answer any question  
9 that you may have.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you so  
11 much for your testimony. I am going to call now on  
12 Melat Seyoum.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

14 MELAT SEYOUM: Thank you. Good  
15 afternoon, honorable Chairperson and distinguished  
16 members of the New York City Committee on  
17 Immigration. My name is Melat Seyoum and I'm the  
18 Director of Policy Advocacy and Strategic  
19 Partnerships at the New York Network of Worker-owned  
20 Cooperatives, also known as NYC NWOC. We're the  
21 member-led trade association representing worker  
cooperative businesses and democratic workplaces in  
New York City. I'm here alongside my colleagues from  
the Democracy at Work Institute, CUNY Law Center for

1 Family Life, Worker's Justice Project, and our  
2 advocacy Council Members representing eight other  
3 organizations that make up the worker cooperative  
4 business development initiative. As many before us  
5 have shared, we are here during these unprecedented  
6 times to support our immigrant worker owners in New  
7 York City, asking the City Council to continue  
8 supporting the expansion of worker ownership in next  
9 year's budget and firmly into the future. Since the  
10 inception of the initiative 11 years ago, we've  
11 launched over 200 cooperative businesses and created  
12 more than 1,200 jobs, delivering not only higher  
13 hourly wages, but also opportunities to build wealth  
14 and assets for individuals that are majority  
15 immigrant women. We have seen firsthand how this  
16 initiative has served to bolster our sector,  
17 strengthening existing cooperative businesses and  
18 creating new ones. Initiative partners have  
19 collectively worked to create a comprehensive  
20 ecosystem of support for cooperative businesses that  
21 not only ensures the creation of new cooperatives in  
low-income areas, but also the technical assistance  
needed to sustain businesses and create jobs, as well  
as the education and outreach needed for communities,

1 interested entrepreneurs, and allied organizations.  
2 We did a lot of work during the pandemic, especially  
3 during the early years. We brought in over \$20  
4 million in grants and loans to cooperatives to keep  
5 them afloat, and we did this with a \$3.7 million  
6 budget. We're here asking the City Council to enhance  
7 our funding to \$5,097,000 in order to- for our  
8 initiatives to double-down on the essential long-term  
9 economic recovery for cooperative businesses that we  
10 will need to claw ourselves out of this current  
11 crisis that we are collectively facing.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
13 expired.

14 MELAT SEYOUM: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you so  
16 much. I'd like to now call up Riczang Grong [sp?].

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

18 RIKSANG GURUNG: Hi, namaste. Thank you  
19 for this opportunity. My name is Riksang Gurung and  
20 I'm a Case Coordinator at Adhikaar. Adhikaar meaning  
21 rights in Nepali is the only woman-led worker and  
community center for the Nepali-speaking community.  
We organize for worker rights, immigrant rights,  
language justice, and youth development. We are the

first place our members go to find help, get on-the-job training and learn English. Our members who live in Jackson Heights, Woodside, East Elmhurst, Elmhurst, [inaudible] Sunnyside, Ridgewood, Jamaica, and Flatbush. We are nail salon workers and nannies, gas station attendants, and small business owners. We are students and home health aides. We are your neighbors. We're asking you the Committee on Immigration to invest in the safety and protection of the people who make this city run. Many of Adhikaar members came to New York after the political crisis in Nepal in the early 2000s. Others came in the months after the 8.0 earthquake in 2015. Some of us were granted temporary protected status, or TPS, as we worked, studied and contributed to this economy. The recent termination of TPS designation for Nepal an increased collusion between immigration enforcement and the police are making our members scared. Our health care and jobs are being lost. Almost overnight TPS holders have been at risk of detention and deportation. This decision comes despite the threat of returning to Nepal at a time of political instability back home. Individuals who relied on the TPS status are now forced to navigate a

1 terrorizing immigration system. The fear of ICE  
2 extends to everything we do. With the support of the  
3 City Council, Adhikaar has expanded our immigration  
4 legal services through rapid response work which has  
5 involved Know Your Rights and safety planning  
6 workshop. We have also developed relationships with  
7 legal organizations and build a referral network  
8 which has resulted in 100+ referrals with adjustment  
9 of status and change of status questions. Adhikaar  
10 has also been hosting monthly Ask Me Anything legal  
infosessions-

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank  
12 you. Your time expired.

13 RIKSANG GURUNG: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you so  
much. And we're now calling up Miral Abbas.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

16 MIRAL ABBAS: Good afternoon, Council  
17 Member, and members of the Committee on Immigration.  
18 My name is Miral Abbas and I'm the Health Partnership  
19 Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American  
20 Children and Families, and I'm here today to urge the  
21 Council to increase funding for the Access Health NYC  
initiative to \$4.5 million in the upcoming budget.



1 This investment is critical for protecting immigrant  
2 New Yorkers at a time when escalating fear, exclusion  
3 and barriers are preventing immigrants from getting  
4 their essential services. Access Health supports a  
5 network of 37 community-based organizations many of  
6 which actually attended this committee today- so,  
7 thank you all to those who have- that all represent  
8 across the five boroughs and provide culturally  
9 responsive, language accessible health education,  
10 outreach, and navigation. These organizations serve  
11 immigrant limited English-proficient, uninsured,  
12 LGBTQ+, and disabled New Yorkers in helping them  
13 access care and benefits regardless of immigration  
14 status, and every year [inaudible] more than 1,500  
15 connections and paired [sic] over 30 languages,  
16 meeting people in their own spaces, places of worship  
17 and trusted networks. For many immigrants, the  
18 organization are the only space and trusted pathway  
19 to care providing health education, combatting  
20 misinformation, and connecting them to essential  
21 services, and this includes for example, deploying  
community health workers at consulates and training  
trusted pharmacists or salon workers to really reach  
communities through these culturally-informed

1 approaches. And today, our communities are facing a  
2 worsening climate of fear. Heightened enforcement,  
3 confusion around policies like public charge and  
4 proposed federal cuts are discouraging many from  
5 seeking the care that they need, and as a result,  
6 families are delaying treatment, opting out of  
7 benefits, and turning to emergency care only when  
8 conditions become severe. And at the same time,  
9 language barriers and misinformation continue to  
10 isolate these communities while economic hardships  
11 force many to deprioritize basic needs over health.  
12 In this environment, our organizations are the only  
13 backbone of support sometimes and they provide  
14 trusted guidance, connect people to care without  
15 fear, and offer critical insight into the challenges  
16 our immigrant communities face. At a time when our  
17 New Yorkers are being pushed further into the  
18 shadows, this city must invest in trusted  
19 infrastructure that keeps them connected to care.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
21 expired.

MIRAL ABBAS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. I'd  
like to now call up Vladimir Tlali.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

VLADIMIR TLALI: [speaking Spanish] Good afternoon everyone. Thank you, Chair Encarnacion and members of the Immigration Committee. My name is Vladimir Tlali and I'm an immigrant and a Senior Policy Strategist at the New York Immigration Coalition. We represent over 200 organization partner across New York. Our communities face unprecedented attacks from the federal government. Investing in the protection and advancing the immigrant communities is a investment in the people who keep New York City running. Let us remember that immigrants generate 37 percent of New York City's total income. As our communities witness masked agents in unmarked vehicles kidnapping and disappearing our neighbors and families without due process, we call for City Council to invest \$169 million to protect New Yorkers from federal overreach. This includes \$119 million for immigration legal services, \$65 million for family support fund, and \$50 million for Restorative Justice programs. The affordability crisis and shifting eligibility rules for child care and worker development programs keep our communities financially stressed. We request \$119 million for economic

justice, including \$50 million for adult literacy, \$54 million for child care for all children, and \$50 million to protect immigrant workers from federal overreach. To advance [inaudible] representation and participation of our communities, we need \$111 million for [inaudible] inclusion, including \$60 million for a census campaign to ensure every New Yorker is counted, \$5.8 million to support language access, \$3 million for multilingual emergency services, \$20 million for naturalization programs, and \$22 million for voting education. Finally, we must prioritize the safety and the health of students and families. We call for [inaudible] investment education funding to address [inaudible] and support English language learners and their families, as well as the [inaudible] for New York City Care to ensure health access for those losing coverage in 2026. \$4.5 million for Access Health and \$100 million for food [sic] connection. These are investments in keeping our city running, not expenses. We urge the City Council to stand with us in creating an inclusive, affordable, and thriving New York City for all. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACION: Thank you. We have now heard from everyone who has signed up to testify. If we inadvertently missed anyone who would like to testify in-person, please visit the Sergeant's table and complete a witness slip now. If we inadvertently missed anyone who would like to testify virtually on Zoom, please raise your hand. No one. Seeing no one else, I would like to note again that written testimony which will be reviewed in full by committee staff may be submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing by emailing it to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). I want to thank everybody who participated today, and I also want to really thank the translator who helped today translate, not just here in person, but also in the room for people online. Thank you so much, and that is the end of our hearing.

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date July 7, 2026