

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
AND YOUTH

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

B E F O R E: ALTHEA V. STEVENS, CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Linda Lee
Julie Menin
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
3 today's New York City Council hearing for the
4 Committee on Children and Youth. If you wish to
5 submit testimony you may at
6 testimony@council.nyc.gov. At this time please
7 silence all electronic devices. Just a friendly
8 reminder, no one may approach the dais at any point
9 during this hearing. Thank you so much. Chair, we
10 are ready to begin.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good morning. I'm
12 Councilmember Althea Stevens, Chair of New York City
13 Council Committee on Children and Youth Services.
14 Welcome to today's hearing on DYCD's Family and
15 Supportive Services. In addition to serving the
16 city's young people, DYCD offers a broad spectrum of
17 programs that serve low-income families and
18 communities. DYCD's six Family Support Services
19 include the Father Initiative, Healthy Families,
20 Senior Services, Economic Development, Adult
21 Literacy, and Safety Awareness and Crime Prevention.
22 Using a strength-based case management approach,
23 providers work with individuals or families to assess
24 their needs and resources to help them obtain
25 support.

2 Apart from the Father Initiative, those five
3 programs fall under the Neighborhood Development Area
4 Contract, which is funded through the Federal
5 Community Service Block Grant Program. The NDAs
6 program-- the NDA programs were founded through a
7 2016 community assessment by DYCD distributed through
8 the city's 41 low-income communities. DYCD surveyed
9 residents around the programs and services that they
10 needed but had not received in the previous 12
11 months. The result of the surveys was supplemented
12 with an input from community members on neighborhood
13 advisory boards to develop priorities for residents.

14 The critical programs were designed to help
15 individuals with families at or below 125% federal
16 poverty levels.

17 DYCD framed the program as essential services to
18 help New Yorkers and New York City move into recovery
19 after the economic devastations of COVID-19.

20 I applaud the why cities grassroots approach--
21 approach that uses community capabilities to address
22 the causes and conditions of poverty. But those DYCD
23 programs are often overlooked and rarely promoted.
24 The long standing vacancies on the neighborhood
25 advisory boards must be filled so that we can

2 strengthen this process and amplify the resources to
3 residents who need them. Additionally, there is a
4 dearth of data on the programs, outcomes, and
5 reporting on the metrics used to evaluate program
6 success.

7 My dual objective today is to learn and-- learn
8 the quantitative and qualitative measures used to
9 assess the Family Support Program and identify ways
10 to further and-- to further promote the services so
11 that we can-- so they are more accessible to New
12 Yorkers who need them.

13 I'd like to thank committee staff for their hard
14 work in preparing for this hearing, Policy Analyst,
15 Elizabeth Arts, Committee Council Christina
16 Yellamaty, as well as my Chief of Staff Lamont
17 Carolina, and my Legislative Director, and the entire
18 A Team back in district 16.

19 I would like to also acknowledge Councilmember
20 Williams, Councilmember Joseph, Councilmember Lee,
21 and I believe Councilmember Menin is remote.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear testimony
23 from the administration. Before we begin, I will
24 administer the affirmation. Please raise your right
25 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole

2 truth and nothing but the truth before this committee
3 and to respond honestly to council member questions?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: I do.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON: I do.

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

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Good morning Chair
9 Stevens and members of the Children and Youth
10 Committee. I'm Mike Bobbit, Deputy Commissioner of
11 Community Development at the Department of Youth and
12 Community Development. I'm joined by my colleague,
13 Ebony Jordan Wilson, Assistant Commissioner for
14 Community Development. On behalf of Commissioner
15 Howard, thank you for this opportunity to update the
16 council about DYCD's family support programs. We
17 appreciate that the committee is uplifting some of
18 our lesser-known programming. The Fatherhood
19 Initiative, and Healthy Families, and seniors
20 programs or services that help improve the lives of
21 NYC families.

22 As you may be aware these programs, along with
23 others, are funded through the federal Community
24 Services Block Grant. Since 1996, DYCD has served as
25 the community action agency for the city, receiving

2 federal-- federal CSBG funds and distributing those
3 funds to local programs in accordance with the goals
4 of the federal statute. CSBG funds enable DYCD to
5 provide services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.
6 Through these funds, DYCD aims to reduce poverty and
7 empower people to achieve self-sufficiency in
8 targeted low-income neighborhoods throughout the
9 city's five boroughs.

10 Fatherhood is funded city wide, while Healthy
11 Families and seniors programs are funded through the
12 Neighborhood Advisory Boards which are in 41
13 communities across the city.

14 I would be remiss if I didn't thank Chair
15 Stevens's efforts to encourage local elected
16 officials to appoint members to the NAB's. We'll be
17 delighted to meet other members of the Council to
18 discuss the NAB's and our easy appointment process.

19 The Fatherhood Initiative was established in 2002
20 in recognition of the positive influence that fathers
21 have on their children. Children who have strong
22 relationships with their father are less likely to
23 get into trouble at home, school, or in the
24 community. An active and nurture-- nurturing style
25 of fathering is also associated with better verbal

2 skills for infants, greater patients for toddlers,
3 and better intellectual functioning and academic
4 achievement among adolescents.

5 For the past several years, the program has
6 supported a diverse group of community-based
7 organizations that specialize in working with
8 disconnected youth, child welfare, working with the
9 formerly incarcerated, and workforce development.

10 Programs offer a robust staffing model with case
11 managers and outreach and retention specialists.
12 This model supports the recruitment of custodial
13 fathers and other peer mentors from program
14 participants, enables them to offer voluntary monthly
15 co-parenting workshops for interested custodial moms,
16 increases awareness and coordination to address child
17 support and visitation concerns, and better ensures
18 appropriate screening and referrals to providers of
19 legal services--mediation, domestic violence services
20 and other necessary social services.

21 Programs are targeted and community districts
22 with a high need for fatherhood services based on the
23 number of children born to unmarried women and the
24 number of individuals on probation. In city fiscal
25

2 year 2023 are reported 1067 noncustodial fathers
3 reconnected with their children.

4 DYCD's fatherhood programs partner with many city
5 agencies, and state and federal partners, including
6 the New York State Office of Children and Family
7 Services, New York State Department of State, and the
8 United States Department of Health and Human Services
9 Administration for Children and Families. We work
10 with these partners to promote a flagship event
11 Desica child to school day each September. The
12 statewide campaign encourages fathers and male
13 caregivers, and male-- male role models to show their
14 children the importance of education by visiting
15 their schools at the start of the year, and staying
16 involved throughout the year. Many dads served by
17 our programs have embraced this challenge and the
18 participating CBOs have developed additional referral
19 sources through burgeoning relationships with
20 schools, after school, and Headstart programs.

21 As part of our efforts to continually improve
22 fatherhood programming, DYCD has provided targeted
23 training and technical assistance to assist programs
24 in initiating outings for dads and co-parents to
25 attend, including museums, picnics, grocery shopping,

2 et cetera, which-- at which co-parents can
3 demonstrate appropriate behavior and share parenting
4 roles managing the engagement of their children.

5 The Neighborhood Development Areas Initiative, or
6 NDA Initiative, fosters community-level engagement to
7 ensure both that residents have opportunities to
8 contribute to change in their neighborhoods, and that
9 services address the most pressing needs of each
10 community. These contracts address seven service
11 areas including the two we're discussing today.

12 Seniors, the social, cultural, and supportive
13 services. These programs provide a range of services
14 for adults aged 60 and older, such as social,
15 cultural, and recreational activities,
16 intergenerational activities, exercise and nutrition,
17 and access to social services to improve their
18 physical, social, and emotional wellbeing, and
19 increase self-sufficiency.

20 These programs serve both those who are homebound
21 and those who are not. Programs must offer
22 assistance in accessing services and benefits,
23 social, cultural, and recreational services and
24 family development coaching. They assist
25 participants in demonstrating self advocacy skills,

2 and improvement of mental behavioral and physical
3 health and well being.

4 Healthy Families support services programs, aimed
5 to support and strengthen families using a holistic
6 strength-based approach based on the principles of
7 family development. Last year, DYCD Healthy Families
8 programs worked with 5140 families to address issues
9 concerning child care, domestic violence, substance
10 abuse, HIV/AIDS, and physical and mental well being.
11 This includes advocacy and assistance and obtaining
12 government benefits and other social services. Each
13 program offers services tailored to community support
14 service needs, which can include SNAP, WIC services,
15 avoiding eviction, nutritional skills, and
16 weatherization assistance.

17 Funding decisions are made by hearing directly
18 from New Yorkers in what services are most needed in
19 their community. In 2022 DYCD conducted a robust
20 community needs assessment across the 41
21 neighborhoods with the highest incidences of poverty,
22 as well as citywide. This CNA aimed to document
23 their views on one of the highest priority social
24 service needs to improve the well being of their own
25

2 communities. DYCD collected over 24,000 usable
3 responses from a total nearly 30,000 responses.

4 In conclusion, we'd like to share a story of one
5 of our many successful program participants: A dad
6 served by our Fatherhood Initiative thanked the
7 program for its tangible and meaningful support. His
8 child and co-parent lived in another state, causing
9 his absence as a father to be even more apparent.
10 Not wanting to be an absent dad, he struggled to
11 identify a pathway back into his child's life felt--
12 excuse me-- that felt appropriate and attainable.

13 Recognizing the need for support, he found and
14 reached out to one of the fatherhood programs funded
15 by DYCD.

16 Unlike some fathers who are mandated to attend
17 programming, this father began and completed the
18 program as a voluntary participant. Attending a 12-
19 week course and working with dads in similar
20 situations motivated him every week. Each week
21 brought him closer and closer to being the father he
22 aspired to become. He strived to be a present father
23 and a positive male figure in his child's life. Like
24 many others, his goal was simply to be involved and
25 be a dependable parent for his child.

2 Upon completing his classes, he next expressed
3 interest in finding employment. The case manager at
4 the program reached out to a partner organization to
5 refer the dad friend employment opportunity where he
6 was hired. After a few months he was offered a
7 permanent position. During his time with the
8 program, the dad built a closer relationship with his
9 co-parent, to whom he apologized for previous
10 grievances and his absence.

11 Insights gained from being in the fatherhood
12 program shifted his perspective, and allowed him to
13 see the co-parent in a new light. Their co-parenting
14 relationship was reinvigorated, and the father worked
15 to repair the dynamic with newfound appreciation for
16 the co-parent and her efforts to care for their
17 child. He was even able to participate in a parent-
18 teacher conference while visiting his child in
19 another city.

20 His dedication to the program presented him with
21 the opportunity to be a better father, using the
22 tools and the teachings provided to him.

23 DYCD's mission is to improve the quality of life
24 of New Yorkers by collaborating with local
25 organizations and investing in the talents and assets

2 of our communities to help them develop, grow, and
3 thrive.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to share DYCD's
5 efforts to serve New York's low income individuals,
6 families, and communities. We are pleased to answer
7 your questions.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. We have a
9 number of questions, so I'm going to jump right into
10 them.

11 Since 1996, DYCD has served as a Community Action
12 Agency, CAA, for New York-- for New York State. What
13 has been some of the key achievements of the
14 neighborhood development area programs? And what
15 can-- what more can DYCD do to uplift and promote
16 those programs?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: I missed one word of
18 your question Chair. What were the key what? I'm
19 sorry.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I asked what were the key
21 achievements of the Neighborhood Development Area
22 programs, and what more can DYCD do to uplift these
23 programs?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you, Chair.
25 It's a great question. So, I joined DYCD in 2010.

2 So, I have some reflection from colleagues who were
3 there when I joined. And then I have some
4 reflections over the period of time since I've been
5 there.

6 This hearing allows us to focus somewhat on the
7 NDA or the Neighborhood Development Areas Initiative.
8 And I think one of the strengths of that initiative
9 is that we've continued to label it as an initiative.

10 Because we do a robust community needs assessment
11 every three years, the initiative is allowed to
12 adapt. Because we review the periodic shifts in
13 poverty across neighborhoods, we're able to revamp
14 the initiative so that we're both targeting services
15 where they're needed most, and that we serve as a
16 listening station to the community as to which needs
17 are most needed. So, I think that we've enjoyed
18 success and been useful because of the dynamism of
19 the NDA initiative.

20 And to the second part of your question, one of
21 the things that me and my team are very proud and
22 excited about is under the leadership, both of the
23 Adams administration and Commissioner Howard, we have
24 really embraced one DYCD mantra. And so these
25 services, which you acknowledged at the outset, and I

2 said in my, my testimony-- We only have a limited
3 amount of federal money. So, it's very important
4 that we're able to try to leverage those dollars.
5 And so whether internally or externally, we're
6 talking about youth services or youth workforce
7 services, there's a conversation about community
8 development and wraparound services for it, for
9 families. So, I think that that's a strength that
10 we've embraced and can continue to lean into going
11 forward.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Please explain the role,
13 and responsibilities, and goals of the Neighborhood
14 Advisory Board, the NAB.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you. As a
16 Community Action Agency, we are one of maybe 1000
17 agencies nationwide that look to combat conditions of
18 poverty. One of the important ways that we
19 demonstrate and make good on that charge, which is a
20 60-year charge now, since Lyndon B, Johnson launched
21 the war on poverty, to demonstrate the maximum
22 feasible participation of those who are impacted by
23 poverty. The Neighborhood Advisory Boards allow
24 DYCD, or I should say enable DYCD to do that
25 strongly.

2 By targeting services in the communities with the
3 highest incidence of poverty, we also recruit
4 volunteers from those communities. So, people who
5 live, work, and play in those neighborhoods who are
6 acutely aware of the conditions on the ground, they
7 are DYCD City's partner, whether it's participating
8 in our community needs assessments, leading the
9 public hearings related to those community needs
10 assessments, and then ultimately when the services
11 are determined and need to be procured, the NAB
12 members join us in reading the funding proposals.

13 So, we make Community Action come alive by
14 enlisting and partnering with members of the
15 community through this program.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many vacancies are the
17 neighborhood advisory boards across the city
18 currently?

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Chair. So, as I
20 said, there's 41 NAB's and each can seat up to 12
21 members. We have 263 active members right now. We
22 have 223 vacancies. DYCD considers a board viable
23 when it has seven or more members. So, we have many
24 viable boards. But we would love to have vibrant
25 boards with full attendance. Of the vacancies, I

2 listed, 63 vacancies can be referred by
3 councilmembers (and I want to thank you again, Chair;
4 you're aware of this, and you've clearly and
5 consistently demonstrated the importance of it and
6 enlisting the attention of your colleagues, we would
7 like to continue, to do that to fill as many of the
8 63 vacancies as we can). There are also 33 vacancies
9 that can be filled by New York State Senators, 31
10 members-- 31 vacancies that can be filled by assembly
11 members, and 43 that can be filled by members of
12 Congress.

13 So we thank you for raising this forum to do
14 that. And if you have advice or suggestions to help
15 encourage other local elected officials, in the way
16 that you have done with members of the council, we
17 will be very glad to do that.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, my office has not
19 only been reaching out to the Council. They gave us
20 the full list, so we've been reaching out to the
21 state and-- and our federal partners as well. And my
22 hope is in the next couple of weeks, we have all
23 those vacancies filled. So, we will continue to work
24 in partnership with you all to try to get these
25 vacancies filled, because I do think it's important.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why-- Why do you think that
4 there's so many vacancies on the NAB, and how many
5 people at DYCD are responsible for covering the NABs?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Great questions.
7 I'll take the second one first. One of the teams
8 under community development is the Neighborhood
9 Advisory Board Liaison Unit. So, I'll just use NABLU
10 as a shorthand. We have a senior director, a
11 director, and we have liaisons. And it's their job
12 to go out in the community they--

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many is--

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: There's four
15 liaisons at present. So, each of them have a number
16 of neighborhoods that they target, across, as I said,
17 the 41 boards.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So that's 41 boards, and as
19 for people?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Um, four line staff,
21 and then we have a director and a senior director.
22 So the director carries seven boards as well. So you
23 have maybe eight or nine boards per-- per liaison.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh. That's probably why
25 you've got vacancies.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: There's a lot of--
3 Well, there's a lot of beating the feet that they do.
4 And to break out each board, DYCD at its discretion
5 can seat up to six people. And what we're trying to
6 do, as another wave evincing this maximum feasible
7 participation, is to partner with the local elected.
8 So we don't want to put people in seats without the
9 local elected officials having referred those
10 persons.

11 So, you know, most of our boards have six or
12 seven people. We want to get to them seven, eight,
13 nine, ten, eleven, twelve people. We do regularly
14 meet and liaise with USCIS External Affairs Team,
15 because obviously External Affairs has a lot of
16 ongoing rapport with local elected officials, and we
17 try to coordinate strategies, including the-- the
18 virtual meeting that you attended some time ago, and
19 we want to replicate that meeting.

20 As to why there are vacancies: Volunteers can
21 serve two 3-year terms. And we do have a number of
22 volunteers who are who are seasoned -- some people
23 sit off the board, and they want to come back later
24 on -- But I think-- sometimes people just live busy
25 lives, they do a term of service and _____ I gave,

2 for somebody else, I think that that can be an issue.
3 Sometimes there's mobility. People live in one part
4 of the city, and now they move to a different part of
5 the city. So, they wouldn't be suitable to be on
6 that board, since it's a hyper-local board.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. Um, obviously,
8 especially when we're looking at communities that
9 have so much poverty, they probably are trying to get
10 things so they can get in better circumstances, like
11 working and taking care of families.

12 But I am concerned about the-- there only being a
13 what is it like a total of six people in department
14 that-- this is really good work, and so thinking
15 about maybe if there was more support, they will be
16 able to kind of do some of the legwork even with like
17 reminding the elected officials around the vacancies,
18 because as we've been calling, and my office has been
19 reaching out: When I tell you almost no one knows
20 what I'm talking about, no one has no idea about what
21 this is, if they have these appointments what the
22 appointees do. Like-- It was like-- Everyone's like,
23 "What is this? What are you talking about?" Like I
24 have people telling my office they were lying.

2 So, the outreach on this is not really happening
3 in a way that I think is making sense. And if it is
4 supposed to be a partnership, we have to really think
5 about how we are making sure that the people who
6 should be making these appoint appointments are aware
7 of it, and have a good understanding? Because it's
8 been taking us a long time, because we've been having
9 to do so much work on helping the electeds office
10 understand even what this is.

11 And so there's, there's a big disconnect in this.
12 So, I definitely want to make sure we spend some time
13 after this, to kind of think about how do we continue
14 more of an information session, and even thinking
15 about right when we leave, how do we continue to have
16 that continuity with the elected officials? Because
17 you know, our-- we term-- we have term limits, right?
18 But even at the city level and at the state level,
19 I'm telling you, they were just like, "What are you
20 talking about? What is this?" And then there was
21 like even people giving us feedback like, "No, that's
22 not what they do." You don't-- We don't appoint
23 them. I was just like, "Why would I call your office
24 and lie?"

2 So, we definitely have to do a bit of a bigger
3 push around information and letting folks know what
4 this is.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We would welcome
6 that. There's some things that we've tried out
7 fairly recently, but we would be very happy to
8 revisit and look at how to expand them. There was a
9 time when we didn't have the marketing materials that
10 we do now. We have brochures. The application
11 itself, we're able to make-- to streamline it so that
12 people can fill out the application if they want to
13 become a board member directly. We would love to
14 routinize and maybe annualize that meeting that we
15 were able to have, that you that you attended. And
16 I'm sure that there's more than that we could do with
17 that.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. We definitely need
19 to kind of like think through that a little bit more.
20 And even with your like the surveys. I remember last
21 year, when I was like going on, I know you guys use a
22 lot of the programs to kind of get the survey out and
23 things like that. But also thinking about how do we
24 use that opportunity to partner with the electeds who
25 have to make appointments to also get the surveys

2 out, and using their office as a way to engage in
3 this process.

4 So, I definitely have ideas, and we'll definitely
5 want to take time to kind of talk that through a
6 little bit more.

7 Do you think the Community Needs Assessment
8 accurately reflects community priorities? And how
9 are the results of the survey distributed back to the
10 NDAs?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Um, I do, and they
12 are. I want to say a little bit more about that.
13 And sure-- I know you're familiar with the how the
14 NADs work.

15 So, again, consistent with this idea of the
16 maximum feasible participation of those impacted by
17 poverty, hearing directly through residents, through
18 the street surveys that happen. We expanded that
19 most recently, we did the Community Needs Assessment
20 by making an online survey available as well, by
21 hosting public hearings, and-- I say host, but it's
22 really the NAB members that host, and then we help
23 facilitate to make sure they run the meetings. And I
24 will acknowledge several members of the Council as
25 well as State-- State Assemblymembers have attended

2 some of those last public hearings. Those are things
3 we want to keep-- keep going.

4 Current providers, past providers come out to
5 those hearings too. So, I think that it's a forum
6 for us to hear a wide range of perspectives. And
7 what emerges from that are the highest priority
8 needs. The way that we have funded the NDA in
9 relation to that is most carefully at the needs gap
10 questions. So, when people say what are the highest
11 priority needs of the neighborhood? We're also
12 asking them, what-- what have you needed that you
13 haven't gotten? And that's helped inform the design
14 of the programs they do. So, I think that we have a
15 consistent and a coherent approach. We're listening
16 very carefully to tour to New Yorkers to residents
17 who are affected by poverty.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And if this is so
19 successful, why are we not like trying to incorporate
20 this to all the programs while DYCD and getting more
21 of a voice and input? And using this model? Because
22 you know, if it's-- it's happening, and we think it's
23 been working so well and getting input from the
24 community members in this way, why are we not kind of

2 expanding this through all of the programs through
3 DYCD?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Well, I actually
5 think in many ways we aren't. So, I'll give an
6 example. This is from the prior administration.
7 After we did the 2016 community needs assessment,
8 when food insecurity was realized to be such a
9 priority area, it-- it caused us to reflect on the
10 discretionary Council-funded food pantries in a
11 different way.

12 So, we've always been supporting that work. But
13 the opportunity to really amplify and raise further
14 attention to that work became much clearer.

15 Another thing that I recall from the 2016
16 Community Needs Assessment: SYP, which has a wide
17 range of funding, and is at a much larger scale than
18 the federal programs we're talking about today,
19 through doing this neighborhood-focused review and
20 the Community Needs Assessment, we saw that there are
21 neighborhoods that were what we might have termed SYP
22 deserts. And so we had helpful conversations
23 internally between community development youth
24 workforce team about looking at programs citing. So
25 the information that comes out of the Needs

2 Assessment is tapped and is accessed throughout the
3 agency. And externally. Like, we share this
4 information with-- with other city agencies. So,
5 over the course of the winter, we'll be finalizing a
6 report from the 2022 Community Needs Assessment.
7 Once it's finalized, we will certainly share it with
8 the Council. And we have every interest in sharing
9 the information. So, it's not just attached to a
10 particular RFP. It's information that's made
11 available generally and broadly.

12 And we do-- We have put them on our website. But
13 we want to do more to-- not just our website, we-- to
14 try to market it more broadly. We've talked with the
15 Mayor's Office of Engagement. We think there's
16 broader audiences, and maybe there was in the past to
17 show that and use the information.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Since 2001, all CAAs
19 including DYCD have been required to report on
20 program performance. Since the current NDA contract
21 went into effect in 2022, what have DYCD reports
22 concluded about NDA program performance? Can you
23 share the report with the committee?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes, thank you. We
25 have shared these reports historically, and we'll

2 follow up later on to make sure that you get the most
3 recent. I believe the most recent showed was 2022.
4 I'll double check after the hearing, but we're
5 working on a 2023--

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, it was 2022. Yeah.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: So I believe it's
8 2022.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. It was 2022.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: So, we'll have it--
11 When we complete and transmit the 2023, we'll get
12 that to the Council.

13 As a Community Action Agency, DYCD relies on a
14 nationally recognized framework called ROMA, which
15 stands for Results-Oriented Management and
16 Accountability. Some principles for results-oriented
17 management include assessing poverty, which we've
18 sort of discussed already, needs the conditions of
19 the community, defining a clear mission, and
20 strategies, and services to address the needs,
21 identifying specific results to be achieved.

22 Some of the principles for results-oriented
23 accountability include developing and implementing
24 processes to measure and record improvements in the
25 condition of people with low incomes. So, we espouse

2 this throughout the CSBG-funded portfolio, and we use
3 a national rubric of service indicators and outcome
4 indicators, so when we enter into contracts with
5 providers, along with enrollment targets, there's
6 anticipated impact from the programs. Because DYCD
7 has a central database, a participant tracking
8 system, as providers are working on the contract and
9 enrolling participants, they're able to upload both
10 qualitative information and case management notes, as
11 well as validated proof when the outcomes from their
12 work are being realized. And we're able to aggregate
13 that information. We do aggregate that on a
14 quarterly, and on an annual basis, and we will
15 continue to share those reports with the Council.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Why aren't the
17 metrics for the NDA programs included in the Mayor's
18 Management Report?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: I don't want to
20 speak out of my-- my depth, but I think the short
21 answer is that I believe that they are. I can carry
22 back to followup with the Council.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They are not.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: There's an internal-
25 - There's an internal method through which the

2 Mayor's Management Report takes advantage of what I'm
3 talking about. So, they may have a different rubric
4 that they're using. But my team checks with the
5 planning program integration and evaluation team on a
6 routine basis. And we report numbers into that.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, that was one of the
8 things as we were preparing for this. That was one
9 of the things that we noticed that it wasn't in the
10 Mayor's Management Report, and we were confused on
11 why that was and-- and really wanted to figure out
12 what-- was it separate or was it being reported
13 somewhere else?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: It's-- sorry.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, no. Go ahead.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: It is, but I'll
17 follow up with you later on so that we can figure out
18 a clear way to illustrate how the numbers that I
19 referencing are interpolated into those numbers.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, it's just probably not
21 clearly distinguished. And so that's-- Because when
22 we were looking-- Like I said, when we were looking,
23 and we were doing the research for it, that was one
24 of the things that, like, kind of stood out to us
25 was, like, "Well, where is the information?" And so

2 whatever-- however they're inputting it, or it's not
3 being distinguished as, you know, the NDAA programs,
4 or this is separate, it's-- Maybe it's being rolled
5 in. But that was a little bit confusing. So,
6 definitely, we can follow up with that.

7 In 2020, the Neighborhood Development Area
8 concept paper, DYCD ID'd economic development and
9 safety awareness and crime prevention as new program
10 areas, and disconnected youth programming. What
11 feedback did the agency received from the 2016
12 community needs assessment that led to this change?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you, Chair.
14 Well, as you know, we conduct the CNA every three
15 years. And as we've discussed, the CSBG funding is
16 minimal-- relatively minimal, and we try to be
17 flexible and adaptable as we are learning things.

18 So, we made an institutional determination to
19 adjust the NDA mix of programs rather than provide
20 duplicative of services. So, I'll give you a little
21 illustration as-- At the inception, the last cohort
22 of programs, when we had the opportunity youth
23 program, there was a belief that, while the DSC
24 already had an array of youth workforce programs, it
25 might be useful to have another program that didn't

2 have some of the educational requirements of those
3 programs. And so that was one of the reasons that we
4 precipitated on launching opportunity programs. We
5 did an internal review, and we engaged an MWBE vendor
6 to do some further research on that portfolio, and it
7 turned out that there were some programmatic and
8 operational challenges with operating the program.
9 Persons who would have qualified for our youth
10 workforce programs were actually-- it ended up being
11 duplicated. They were being enrolled in the same
12 kind of programs. So the target audience we sought
13 wasn't really being reached. And like other NDA
14 programs -- and now I'm getting a little wonky, I
15 apologize -- But other NDA programs, they're hyper-
16 specific. So, you're enrolling people in the-- in
17 the main-- in the neighborhood, and the wages would
18 be paid out of the same allocation. So, in order to
19 do that program, when it was piloted, the wages were
20 paid for; the workshops were not. So, when we had
21 youth enrolled in that program and they found about
22 other youth-- youth workforce programs that were
23 paying for them to be in workshops, so I'd rather be
24 in that program.

2 So, when those things happened, we saw there was
3 an opportunity to shift and to lean into a
4 reinvigorated version of a program that the agency
5 hadn't supported since 2003, which was the Economic
6 Development Program. And I'll add this: there's
7 precedent for this before, because under the last
8 administration, when there was a dramatic expansion
9 of afterschool, there used to be NDA high school and
10 NDA middle school programs, but we didn't need to
11 have any middle school programs when there was city
12 tax levy funding that was amply supporting after-
13 schools. So, we were able to lean further into some
14 of these otherwise unaddressed needs.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Under the stakeholder
16 engagement, and 2020, and NDA concept paper agent,
17 the agency said, interviews-- interviews were
18 conducted with the providers who withdrew their
19 contracts prior to the end of their contract terms to
20 learn more about the administrative and operational
21 reasons.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Some providers--

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Were--

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: I'm sorry.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No. I was just going to
3 finish the quote.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Oh. I'm sorry.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: --for doing so. What are
6 the reasons providers pulled out of the contracts?
7 And what did DYCD learn from those interviews?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Some providers
9 reported they felt there were constraints, or
10 additional constraints, because of the federal
11 funding and administrative requirements, and that
12 made the contract harder for them to operate. So, in
13 terms of what DYCD learned from that: One, in terms
14 of stakeholder engagement, I continue to believe this
15 is a necessary leg of the stool. We want to talk to
16 current providers, but we should continue to talk to
17 anybody else who gave back a contract to know why.
18 And we look where we can to clarify, or to minimize
19 any undue administrative burdens. Although at the
20 same time our hands can be somewhat bound, because we
21 have to report both the state and federal regulations
22 for the use of this federal money.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So then, how do we then
24 alleviate this from happening again, right?, if
25 there's like additional issues that some providers

2 are seeing. How do we moving forward, try to rectify
3 some of those things?

4 One, what I think significant change we made with
5 this round of the NDA RFP is, whereas historically we
6 had a contract floor of \$50,000, we raised that to
7 \$100,000. So, that does mean with a finite amount of
8 money, there's a lesser number of contracts. But it
9 also seems to mean -- and I think the response we've
10 gotten providers, it is the case -- that it gives
11 them more money to work with, and they have more
12 viable contracts. So, they're able to both do their
13 programmatic work and attend to the administrative
14 requirements that are placed upon us by state and
15 federal oversight that we have to convey to them.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How frequently does DYCD
17 meet with community-- or communicate with NDA program
18 providers?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: How frequently?

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Providers are
22 brought together on at least a quarterly basis by
23 every program type, so that the-- the Senior Director
24 and the Director for a portfolio either in person or
25 now-- since the pandemic, we're able to do a lot

2 virtually. We will meet virtually. In the first
3 couple of years of the pandemic, we increased that.
4 So we were meeting on about a monthly basis because
5 the pandemic was so disruptive. And we use those,
6 not just as oversight meetings, but as a peer share--
7 and we continue as a peer-sharing forum. So if there
8 is promising or a best-practices approach that some
9 of them are trying, we want to make sure as a
10 community, they're able to do that. And then
11 finally, we use those as an opportunity to introduce
12 other resources of the city agency and otherwise.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Family Health Program
14 assists families and accessing resource for a range
15 of needs, including domestic violence, substance
16 abuse, health and nutrition, and assistance in
17 obtaining government benefits and social services.
18 The Family Health program addresses a broad spectrum
19 of issues. What are the primary care that providers
20 are addressing in those communities?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Healthy Families
22 Programs, as you rightly pointed out, have a broad
23 array of services and opportunities that they can--
24 they can work with families around. So that could
25 include SNAP or TANF, securing Social Security

2 benefits, emergency food assistance, transportation
3 services, employment or domestic violence support,
4 mental health services, safe temporary shelter,
5 helping families avoid eviction, heat assistance,
6 utility payment assistance, documentation, such as
7 social security cards, driver's license birth
8 certificates. It's a pretty broad range of
9 activities that they engage in.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many individuals and
11 families did the Healthy Programs serve last year?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Last year, 5143
13 individuals and families.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What methods do program
15 providers use to promote the services and recruitment
16 of the clients?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Many providers
18 operate the contracts out of their main
19 administrative site, and they leverage existing
20 community relationships that they have. Some of the
21 community partnerships-- Excuse me. Three community
22 partnership agreements are required by the RFP. And
23 that's a minimum, although providers may have more
24 than those-- those three.

25 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What does that mean?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: A community agree--
3 like a referral agreement so they can make and
4 receive--

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, you mean-- Oh, like a--
6 Yeah. Yeah.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: --referrals. Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry. I'm a little
9 out of it. Yes, yes.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: No, I'm-- I--
11 appreciate-- I appreciate that you. You're holding
12 a very well, Chair. Yeah.

13 And additionally, we have some marketing
14 materials that we made available that are very
15 client-focused, which I'll share with the Council
16 later.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so do-- And you know,
18 this is always one of the things that I'm always
19 curious about, especially with programming. How are
20 we integrating this into all the other programs that
21 you have, right? Because so often-- And this is one
22 of the things I'm always yelling about, where, like,
23 for example, I feel like we collect a lot of
24 information, but not the stuff that we need, right?
25 So, like when young people for SYP were asking for

2 accounts and billable, we are not asking them or if
3 they're in a shelter or if they need additional food,
4 or things like that. And then this would be a great
5 place to have that information, and then give them
6 referrals to a program like this that can then help
7 them with the services. So, how are we cross-
8 pollinating this work that's going on in these
9 programs? And how do we get to a place where we are
10 collecting information that we can then use to refer
11 them to programs that we already have within the
12 agencies?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you. I'll
14 give you a couple of examples, Chair, and then we're
15 always up for brainstorming about further ways to--
16 to leverage.

17 So, one, within the portfolio in the enrollment
18 process, there's some questions that we ask. And to
19 your point, like don't ask information that you don't
20 intend to do anything with.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We have a lot of that in
22 our programs.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: So, we asked at
24 enrollment if the family-- I'm sorry, didn't hear
25 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I was saying we have a
3 lot of that in our programs.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yeah, well, we try--
5 we try to make use of what we're asking for. So, we
6 ask at enrollment if the family doesn't have health
7 insurance and wants to be approached by someone about
8 that. So, that's not just out of curiosity. We have
9 a memorandum of understanding in place with-- with
10 MetroPlus says they are the health insurance enroller
11 in their quasi relationship with our sister agency,
12 Health + Hospitals.

13 So, we periodically turn that information over.
14 So again, these are participants who say they do wish
15 to be contacted, and health insurance enrollers don't
16 just talk about MetroPlus. They can review all the
17 health insurance plan that may be available.

18 So there's HIPPA regulations that limit how much
19 information we can get back about that information.
20 But we do have cooperative conversations to just try
21 to understand like, generally, how well are those
22 referral relationships going? That's one.

23 Another is we asked, similarly, if they want to
24 be contacted with someone about assistance getting
25 their taxes done. Because, from the information were

2 aware from Department of Consumer and Worker
3 Protection, basically, anyone who would be enrolled
4 in a community service block grant funded program
5 would qualify to get their taxes done for free. And
6 so we do a push out every year before tax time to let
7 people know about DCWP programs. And we also
8 encourage our providers throughout the year to do
9 that. There's also-- [TO ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
10 JORDAN-WILSON:] What's the other? The VITA Centers?
11 [TO COUNCIL:] No. The VITA Centers is the taxes.
12 I'm sorry. Yeah, it's the same thing I'm-- I'm
13 referencing. And I thought I had a third. [TO
14 SELF:] What was the third? [TO COUNCIL:] We've been
15 talking cooperatively with our sister agency
16 Administrative Children's Services, because -- as I'm
17 sure the Chair is aware -- they've been expanding
18 their Family Enrichment Center.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: So, we want to
21 engage in mutual referrals between those programs.
22 So that-- that's one--

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, I love to hear that
24 you guys are talking, because you guys know how I
25 feel-- about we don't be talking with each other.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We are talking. We
3 are talking.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So that-- that makes me a
5 little bit happy.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: The last thing I
7 want to say real quickly is that, under the
8 leadership of Commissioner Howard and the one DYCD
9 city mantra-- I'll give you examples. For instance,
10 as you well know, a year ago when the Office of
11 Neighborhood Services integrated into DYCD, that was
12 a great opportunity to really cross pollinate work.
13 And so over the past year, I've referred to-- my team
14 refers to community development as really community
15 development plus public safety. So, if we have
16 programs, which we do, that are targeting
17 interventions to young people to try to desist from
18 violence, young people live places, and young people
19 have family members. So, some of the programs that
20 we're viewing right now, Healthy Families Program, we
21 want to make sure that the folks who are doing those
22 interventions know about those programs. If you want
23 the family-- If you want the youth to desist from
24 violence, you also want to support the family. So,

2 we want to use models like we have. And so, we've
3 already been embarking the past year on that.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I know, because I was
5 yelling about that for the first two years. And so,
6 I think they wanted me to stop yelling about that.

7 But I just have a clarifying question. Because
8 you mentioned earlier that, like, on-- like in the
9 applications, you're asking if they want access to
10 healthcare and things like that. And you're saying
11 that that is part of The Healthy Families? Like
12 that's part of their paperwork for when they're going
13 into to get these services, correct? Or...?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes. And.

15 So the question, as it is framed is: If you
16 don't have health insurance, do you want to be
17 contacted about it?

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: And we ask that as
20 part of the Healthy Families application, but also
21 part of all the other anti-poverty program
22 applications. So we ask it of seniors. We ask it
23 of, you know, even the NDA High School.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So my question is then--
25 Even-- And even if we wanted to just look at the

2 NDAs, why don't we ask those same questions for kids
3 who are applying for like SYP, the After School
4 Program? Like then why don't we just not use that--
5 that matrix across the board then?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We-- We did
7 actually. I forgot to mention it. We piloted it,
8 and then we've expanded it across the agency. So, we
9 do.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I've got to check in
11 with that one.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We have a unit--
13 I'm sorry.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I've got to check in with
15 that one. Because I haven't heard about that one
16 yet.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: [TO ASSISTANT
18 COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON:] Identify yourself.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON: Hi. Ebony
20 Jordan-Wilson, Assistant Commissioner for Community
21 Development.

22 So, we have a universal application at DYCD.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON: So, those
25 questions appear on-- on all of them.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, I have to check in.
3 I haven't seen application in two years. So I'll go
4 look. I'll look, and I'll bring it back. I'll let
5 you all know.

6 What is the cost per participant for the
7 contracted Healthy Families Program providers?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: [TO ASSISTANT
9 COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON:] This is it right here?
10 [TO COUNCIL:] Uh, \$952.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's a little low. I see
12 why people were sending back these contracts. I'm
13 going to pause here and make space for my colleagues
14 who might have questions. I think Councilmember
15 Joseph has a question.

16 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair. I'm
17 going to make you smile just a little bit. I used to
18 be the Chairperson in my NAB in 2007, and I served
19 under Councilmem-- Senator Parker appointed me. So--
20 - And we used to meet at my old school when I was an
21 educator, or forever educator.

22 Good morning. Thank you for being here. I just
23 have a couple of questions around your Fatherhood
24 Initiatives.

2 And as I was talking to the Chair, this is like a
3 big secret inside the agency. We want to see you
4 robust engagement, robust advertisement for the
5 programs to support fathers. We know that's needed.
6 So, how many fathers have you served to this
7 initiative since 2023?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you for your
9 participation on the NAB, and thank you for your
10 question. In 2023, we served 1225 dads.

11 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: How are the-- How are the
12 majority fathers come to know of your service? Are
13 they referred? Walk ins? And how does that work?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: It-- It's a wide
15 range. Some of the consistent referral partners have
16 been Administration for Children's Services and
17 Department of Probation. They do receive walk-ins.
18 There's also a positive word of mouth. So, sometimes
19 clients who may not initially have wanted to be in a
20 program, but once they are in the program, they find
21 it a welcoming environment, and they will let other
22 dads in their personal network know about the
23 program.

24 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: That's good. Is the
25 service mandated through courts, ACS, or volunteer?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: It's not mandated
3 from DYCD's perspective. We make the services
4 available. Some of the referral partners may have
5 set that as a condition. So, if there's an
6 allegation of abuse or neglect, ACS may require the
7 parent to-- to perform certain things to demonstrate
8 why they can have access and rights to their child.
9 And again, we support that as well as many other
10 circumstances dads may be facing.

11 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Okay. So that's one way
12 to get them back into relationship with their child
13 through ACS referral.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes.

15 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, good. So, what
16 outreach does DYCD do to ensure that parents--
17 fathers are aware of this program. Is it other than
18 ACS courts? Volunteers? Do you go to college
19 campuses? Or is this available in public schools? I
20 used to be a-- a public school educator. I never saw
21 this program come across. I used to do a program
22 called (don't laugh) Doughnuts For Dads. And it was
23 one way it was one way to get dads into the building
24 to talk about them, because they usually are left
25 outside of the conversation when it comes to

2 education. But we look to dads for discipline. But
3 I always think it's a holistic approach into serving
4 families. So...

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: No. I-- I very much
6 agree with you. There's a wide array of things that
7 we attempt to do.

8 So, one, the providers themselves are always
9 recruiting, and in the staffing model there's both
10 case managers and outreach and retention specialists.
11 So, one of the anecdotes I like is: One of the
12 programs in Queens, one of the staff will regularly
13 go to Home Depot, and outside Home Depot, you know
14 that there are disaffected young men, and say, you
15 know, "Hey, brother. You need some help?" And then
16 like, "I got a program for you." Like, go where
17 people are. Actually go walk by a playground in the
18 afternoon. Some of some of our programmers are smart
19 enough to enroll staff that understand those
20 realities and can speak to men in those situations.

21 There's things that DYCD does, essentially, too.
22 So for several years, we've had our staff join DOE
23 now, or NYC public schools. Whenever parent
24 coordinators are meeting, or there's a conference, or
25 things that they can do. I mentioned in my

2 testimony, Dad's Take A Child to School is a great
3 campaign, and a vehicle, and it's an excuse. So if
4 fathers haven't been on-- Or fathers, or male
5 caregivers, or role models haven't been on people's
6 radar. Let's look at the start of the year. Let's
7 invite everybody in. These events are never to
8 slight mom. So, mom can have doughnuts too. Anybody
9 wants to have--

10 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: No. I do Muffins With
11 Mom. So, Donuts With Dad and Muffins With Mom.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Nice. Nice. I like
13 the alliteration.

14 So, we do those things. And then more recently,
15 on this administration, the Commissioner has
16 supported our doing an Affirming Fatherhood
17 Convening. So, we've done that twice. We anticipate
18 doing that again this coming June, holding for a
19 date. I want to acknowledge to the Council,
20 Councilmember Riley actually spoke at the last event,
21 and I really appreciate his-- his consistency on that
22 front. We try to do what we can.

23 One of the things -- I don't want to go on too
24 long, but I wanted to say, but one of the things I
25 think we've noticed, and I said it in sort of a

2 teasing way: Sometimes dads don't want to be in the
3 program until they're in the program.

4 So, we've created alumni-- With the programs,
5 we've created alumni spaces. So even though you got
6 what you came for, once you found a welcoming
7 environment and spaces where otherwise some dads my
8 not feel there is a safe place to talk: Stay. Stay
9 and then use what you've learned to pull the next
10 brother into the program. But some of those folks
11 can then go on and communicate.

12 So, this is a direction that we want to continue
13 to lean. And I think that especially as I'm mindful
14 of Mayor Adams when he references Bishop Tutu: You
15 see people fall in the river, you pull them out, but
16 you have to go further upstream to find out why
17 they're falling in. And I think of the Father
18 initiative very much as being aligned with that.

19 [BELL RINGS]

20 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Chair, can I ask--? Thank
21 you.

22 How many-- Out of how many borrows do you
23 operate?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We have programs in
25 all five boroughs. That was important to us when we

2 procured in the current round, to make-- We hadn't
3 had a program in Staten Island before. We wanted to
4 be sure that we're in all five boroughs.

5 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: How do you measure
6 success? You know, you need-- The assessment.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: There have been two
8 measures, and under the current RFP we added a third.

9 There's a survey that's conducted. We call it a
10 survey but I refer to it as a facilitated interview.
11 So, when a dad comes into the program, a case manager
12 will sit down with him and ask him a range of
13 questions then include things like, "How often do you
14 see your child? Do you owe formal child support? Do
15 you pay to have arrears? Or do you have informal
16 arrangements? What's the relationship like with the
17 mom?"

18 And then as dads spend time in the program, both
19 with their case manager, doing their parenting
20 skills, and other programming that an individual
21 provider might have for them, they return to those
22 same questions every quarter that the dad remains in
23 the program.

24 And when the dad's reported score -- we have
25 Likert scores behind some of those questions --

2 emotional engagement, financial engagement goes up,
3 the program has demonstrated they've met the outcomes
4 of the program. So, that's the way it's worked for a
5 while. And we added, as I said, a third measure,
6 which is these are anti-poverty programs. So, if the
7 data is able to show validated proof -- was
8 unemployed, is now employed; was homeless, has now
9 found a residence -- they can earn an outcome by
10 helping stabilize the dad. So, we'll say any-- any
11 two of those three shows that you've worked hard in
12 meaningful ways with the dad.

13 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: When-- When participants
14 stop attending, what's the tactic to get them back
15 into the program?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Huh. A wide range
17 of things that are done. So, one is we support the
18 programs that you don't have to exit someone once
19 they've been enrolled to the end of the year, because
20 we know adults are busy and they might disappear for
21 various reasons. We've heard anecdotally sometimes
22 somebody gets locked up, or moves, or, you know,
23 whatever the case may be. During the pandemic, when
24 service-- services had to move to virtually, that was
25 a boon to some of our programs that serve adults, and

2 the father programs were among those programs,
3 because now a dad could be seeking employment and
4 could still dial in to be with his program.

5 So, we try to offer programs with reasonable
6 flexibility. And I mentioned a moment ago, the
7 staffing model: Hiring persons with the cultural
8 competence to-- to be good at engaging this
9 particular population is important.

10 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: How many-- What's the
11 percentage of fathers that complete the program?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: I'll let-- Page--
13 Let this-- Last year, we had 69% of the dads who
14 started completed the program.

15 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: And you said you-- you
16 work with fathers that are justice involved? What
17 support do you provide for justice-involved fathers?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We have one contract
19 that focuses on dads with prior criminal justice
20 involvement. Although all programs have-- have
21 familiarity with the issues, since they're all
22 receiving referrals to some extent from Department of
23 Probation. The provider that does that targeted work
24 leverages our contract with other reentry services
25 that they provide. So, like cognitive behavioral

2 restructuring. Thinking For a Change is the
3 curriculum that they use. So they're able to blend
4 the fatherhood work with other services that they're
5 doing.

6 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. What-- What
7 additional support can the Council do to support
8 these amazing programs that are hidden? I think
9 there should be a robust marketing plan to let these
10 know, as I spoke to the Chair, these are-- So our
11 purpose today is to shed light on these amazing
12 programs that are happening. But a lot of New
13 Yorkers don't know about it. So, what can the
14 Council do to support?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you. I think
16 this perennial Dad's Take Their Child to School Day
17 campaign is something that Council could continue to
18 embrace and uplift. We will be there. And not only
19 the father providers there, but we encourage--
20 certainly under my portfolio, we encourage all the
21 city programs to find ways to participate.

22 So, if we can amplify and uplift that I think
23 that would be great. And stay tuned, as soon as we
24 confirm the date for the next Affirming Fatherhood
25 Convening. We had councilmember Riley once, maybe we

2 can get him back. Maybe we're going to have some
3 other Councilmembers--

4 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: He'll be there.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: --join us at that.

6 He'll be there? [chuckles]

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And we'll make sure--

8 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: She confirmed for all of
9 us.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And we'll make sure Salaam
11 is there too, because he has a lot of kids too.

12 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: I know that CUNY has a
13 Fatherhood Initiative Program. Is there any
14 partnership or talks with them?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: There is. We've--
16 We've talked on a-- on a regular basis. We had a
17 meeting not too long ago with Nathifa Forde and the
18 YMI Team.

19 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Mm-hmm.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: The program staff
21 are in communication. We play complementary roles, I
22 would say, and we're engaged in some dialogue about--
23 I don't know where-- I can't speak to the details of
24 where this is going to go right now. But we've begun
25 collaborative conversations both with YMI and with

2 ACS, as well as HRA's Office of Child Support. Like,
3 how can we continue to support one another? Realize
4 areas of mutual benefit, but also areas that are
5 complementary? So, that's going to be an ongoing
6 process, but I'm glad we embarked on that at the end
7 of last fall.

8 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: I thank you too, because
9 I'm a mom of four boys. So, I want to make sure
10 fathers are supported. Chair Stevens, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, thank you. Because I
12 know even we've had conversations about the
13 Fatherhood Initiative. And when we first spoke about
14 it, I remember you being so excited about it. And
15 it's definitely one of the things I think we do need
16 to make sure that we're uplifting and talking about.
17 Because especially we are a council of women. But we
18 also know about equity. And we know how it feels
19 sometimes not to be part of the conversation. And
20 the father part is often not talked about, and they
21 also need support.

22 And so we definitely want to make sure that we're
23 supporting that program and uplifting it. And Kevin
24 Riley has been very adamant about it. You know, he's
25 does his Dad Gang stuff. And, you know, there's a

2 lot of young men doing great things, especially
3 promoting fatherhood. And so we want to make sure
4 that we're also supporting that, because that's just-
5 - Fatherhood is about family, and so we want to make
6 sure as we're moving forward, we continue to push
7 forward.

8 [BACKGROUND VOICES]

9 Oh, no problem.

10 Well, Councilmember Williams has to go.

11 So, we're going to go on to the senior services.

12 DYCD senior services, for people aged 60 and older,
13 offer social and recreation activity integration
14 activities, exercise, nutrition, access to health
15 insurance, medical assistance, and community service.

16 How many individuals did this program serve in
17 2023?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: 1160 in FY 23.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are the most prevalent
20 cases senior services program providers are
21 addressing with the NDAs?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Most prevalent of
23 late have been SNAP, TANF, Social Security benefits,
24 emergency food assistance, transportation services
25 with a van service or MetroCards, domestic violence

2 support, mental health services, avoiding eviction,
3 and receiving acceptance at rent stabilized hou--
4 housing, excuse me, utility payment assistance.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And, I guess, could you
6 talk a little bit about how these programs are
7 working in collaboration with DFTA and those things?
8 Because this-- this program is-- is more like a
9 supplement to some of the programs that's already in
10 existence, correct?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: They serve a very
12 complementary role. The Department For The Aging is
13 a key partner for the program, and our-- our older
14 adults-- The Commissioner-- DFTA has taught us to
15 say older adults, so this is your chance to stop
16 saying "seniors".

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No. My seniors is cool
18 with me saying "seniors." They said they like it, so
19 I'm not changing it.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Heheh. They utilize
21 space at DFTA centers.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So these programs, like I
23 said, they are pretty much like a complement to it?
24 Okay.

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, what's the cost per
3 participant for our Senior Services Contract
4 providers?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: \$833.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, it's getting lower and
7 lower, huh? Okay, well...

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: It's higher than it
9 was, but...

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's high-- What was it?
11 Two dollars? That's outlandish.

12 So, it has to be a supplement, because there's no
13 way that this could be a standalone program, because--
14 - what-- \$800? Like I don't know what we get with
15 that.

16 This is the first cycle of economic development
17 programming during the demands for this programming,
18 coming out of the NABs. What made this a pressing
19 issue, and how is the program progressing in the last
20 two years with the contract.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you for the
22 question. What made it a pressing issue? I shared
23 some of this in my earlier testimony about the NDA
24 initiative being able to adapt. So, one thing I
25 hadn't mentioned: Some years back, the way the needs

2 assessments were conducted was fine. And I think you
3 could call it a good participatory budgeting, or
4 participative voting process. There would be a list
5 of programs that DYCD had been funding, and residents
6 would say which program that they want. And that's
7 fine. However, when we revamped the Community Needs
8 Assessment in 2016, we began to ask the question very
9 directly: "What are the highest needs in this
10 community?" And there was a broad range of needs.
11 We'll send you the 2020 community assessment report
12 again. So, you can see: There's maybe about 30
13 different indicators of need.

14 And when we started asking in a more granular
15 way, we asked questions that if we hadn't asked, we
16 wouldn't know, like assistance starting a business.
17 And so, when that emerged as one of the highest
18 priorities from communities that we need to have a
19 direct response and this is one of the highest
20 priority needs. And so that was the creation-- Or
21 the relaunching, rather, sorry.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How do economic development
23 programs provide providers partner with BIDs, local
24 development corporations, and take advantage of city
25 resources?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Um, two pieces to
3 that answer, Chair. One, both at inception, when we
4 launched the concept paper and we did the RFP we
5 consulted EDC and Small Business Services. We wanted
6 to make sure we were approaching something that would
7 be complementary but not duplicative of their work.
8 And so we spoke cooperatively and engendered their
9 their buy-in. And then once we entered into contract
10 with the providers, each of them do have
11 relationships with-- with BIDs and with-- [TO

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON:] What's the
13 other term? [TO COUNCIL:] I'm just-- I'm-- My brain
14 is freezing for a second. Excuse me. [BACKGROUND
15 VOICE] Thank you. Local development corporations.
16 And we continued to meet-- We actually had a call
17 yesterday with SBS to think of ways to continue to
18 bolster and support the portfolio as a whole.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: According to the RFP,
20 economic development contractors are required to
21 utilize the following national performance indicators
22 to measure their outcomes and achievements on a
23 quarterly basis: How many small businesses and
24 individuals are served-- were served last year, and

2 how many jobs were created and maintained within the
3 NDAs?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Last year, there
5 were 854 small businesses and individuals served.
6 And we have a breakdown for you: Of that 41% of
7 those were aspiring entrepreneurs, 35% were
8 entrepreneurs awaiting licensing, and 24% were small
9 business owners. And in terms of the jobs created
10 and maintained: 26 jobs were created within a small
11 business. And examples of that: A small business
12 owner was able to secure commercial space, open their
13 first brick and mortar, and hire staff. 14 jobs were
14 maintained. And an example of that: A participant
15 operating a smart contracting business needed
16 financing to maintain cash flow and was able to
17 register as a licensed contractor, apply for a
18 business loan, and get approved for a \$25,000 loan.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, can you can you share
20 the quarterly national performance indicator with the
21 committee?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. All right,
24 moving on. The goals of DYCD Adult Literacy Program
25 is to help New Yorkers obtain reading, writing,

2 communication skills that they want and need to gain
3 employment and pursue for that-- pursue for their
4 education. How many participants enrolled in the
5 Adult Literacy Program in 2023?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: There were 16,520
7 participants enrolled.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: 16,520.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes. That's across
10 the adult literacy portfolio.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How do-- How do providers
12 recruit for the Adult Literacy Program?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: To a great degree,
14 outreach is through word of mouth and referrals from
15 family and friends, but providers also do conduct
16 street outreach, tabling at events, and dropping off
17 flyers. Media outreach includes social media
18 announcements and ethnic newspaper ads.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What percentage of high
20 equivalent participants obtained a diploma in 2023?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: In 2023, 1727
22 students were enrolled in ABE HSC programs, and 423
23 students were referred to take the GED. Of the
24 students that were referred and deemed ready to take
25 the GED, 120 students passed and received a diploma.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So 123 received a diploma.

3 According to DYCD's 2020 Neighborhood Development
4 Area concept paper, adult literacy education and high
5 school equivalency services are for those at current
6 grade level as measured as the test of Adult Basic
7 Education TAB. Does DYCD administer TABs for current
8 students and prospective students? And what
9 percentage-- percentage of participants advanced to
10 the next adult basic education level in 2023?

11 [25 seconds silence]

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Chair I'm sorry, I
13 don't seem to have that figure, but I can-- I can
14 follow up with you after the hearing.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Please. That
16 will be amazing.

17 In addition to the NDAs, adult literacy services
18 in 2024 released a literacy service RFP. This RFP
19 included a funding formula based on priorities,
20 neighborhood tabulation areas, and ATEs. This
21 differs from the previous geographical requirements
22 and literacy service RFPs. Can you explain the
23 reason for the change?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Uh, yes Chair. You
25 know that we have an-- an RFP that's out now. So,

1 I'm somewhat limited as to what I can say. But I can
2 say DYCD's equity investment approach for the RFP
3 drives funding into the highest needs communities and
4 accounts for the ways that poverty and other
5 indicators of need have shifted in the past 10 years
6 using the most recent American Community Survey data
7 by neighborhood tabulation area. It is made
8 available through the NYC Department of City
9 Planning.

11 This approach reflects DYCD's commitment--
12 Excuse me, it reflects the commitment of both the
13 Administration and DYCD to equity. In order to
14 determine which neighborhoods were most in need of
15 adult literacy programs, DYCD used the census data to
16 identify NTAs with the highest poverty rates, lowest
17 educational attainment, and limited English
18 proficiency. And the department used census data
19 from 2017 to 2021, which is the most recent data
20 available.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so this was a decision
22 that the USDA made that they said that they wanted to
23 use this data to kind of like streamline the
24 processes. This is a decision that came straight
25 from you guys, correct?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Again, reflecting
3 the agency's own, and the administration's interest
4 in equity, we're trying to take advantage of the most
5 recent data, and using poverty and English language
6 learners also, in the case of adult literacy, as
7 criteria to make decisions.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so even just thinking
9 about this, and this is-- this is me just thinking.
10 Like, obviously, you said the data was used from the
11 last census. But we know that, especially with the
12 influx of asylum seekers, and you know, us being in
13 the middle of that, these-- these numbers have
14 changed dramatically. So, have you guys taken that
15 into consideration?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: I can carry back,
17 your raising the question in the clarifier to the to
18 the team.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, because I think that
20 is important. Obviously, I'm always yelling at you
21 all to use data. So, I can't come back-- go back on
22 it now. But I think we also have to make sure that
23 we're also looking at current trends, and what's
24 happening currently. And it's different than it was
25 two years ago. And it looks very different, but the

2 data that we're using, and that's saying like, "Oh,
3 we're looking at the trends in poverty." It actually
4 looks different now, because we had an influx of so
5 many people coming into the city from out of the
6 country. So, I would definitely encourage for us to
7 make sure that we are assessing much more current
8 data because we know that those things have changed
9 so dramatically in the last two years.

10 Are providers who do not have a site within a
11 priority NFT excluded from applying from the literacy
12 RFP?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Uh, no. The RFP is
14 open to all. Any organization can apply by proposing
15 a program location within the target NTAs. In
16 response to feedback from the Council and others,
17 we've also issued an addendum to the RFP, which
18 allows providers to apply to the NTA closest to their
19 proposed location.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so even-- And I know,
21 previously, you had said that the enrollment for the
22 current Adult Literacy Programs are 16,520. And then
23 currently, I believe with the current RFP those
24 numbers are down significantly. I think we're at
25 like, 16,000. Do you know why we are decreasing the

2 amount of slots that we're making available for this
3 adult literacy?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: I-- I reported
5 elsewhere in my-- my testimony and you also opined
6 when you have a fixed amount of money and you've
7 gotten feedback that staffing levels haven't been as
8 robust as you might have liked. If you then increase
9 the staffing levels to provide a more robust service,
10 that's going to have an impact on the total number of
11 slots. So, that is taking place here.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. You know, we're
13 doing the RFP now, we and have so much more to work
14 on. So, we'll keep-- keep talking about this.
15 Because I know this is something that's been really
16 important. I've been getting a lot a lot of calls
17 and conversation around this. So we'll definitely
18 keep talking and having these conversations
19 additionally offline.

20 According to DYCD's website, members of the
21 Safety Awareness and Crime Prevention Program
22 community-- Oh wait. I think Councilmember Williams
23 is back. I'll let her jump in right now for her
24 questions. [TO COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS:] I was up to
25 the Safety Awareness and Crime Prevention.

2 [BACKGROUND VOICE] Go ahead. No go ahead. Do it.
3 No, go ahead. You go ahead. Thank you.

4 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Hello. Actually, if I
5 could just ask one question before the safety
6 question about the NEBS. I know it says that it's in
7 41 areas. Does it-- Because I know, I've been
8 having a conversation with the Chair, because I know
9 some of the areas-- It's by-- Is it by poverty
10 tracks? Census tracts? Like how do they
11 determine...

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We are looking at
13 poverty. In particular, because of the CSBG Act, we
14 look at households with 125% of federal poverty or--
15 or below.

16 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. And I will follow
17 up with the Chair and/or DYCD to figure out, like, my
18 role. Because parts of my district are on that
19 census track and parts aren't. And so I just wasn't
20 sure, like, if it's really the Speaker, because we
21 share community board 12 And that's the part that has
22 some of those census tracts. I just wanted to make
23 sure that I could also appoint, if there was any
24 areas in my district or if it falls, primarily in her
25 district. But that was--

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We will be happy to
3 follow up with you.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You have appointments.
5 I'll follow up on her. She has appointments. I have
6 the list. I've been working very closely with
7 [inaudible].

8 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. And then the
9 other question that I have is what the Chair was
10 headed towards, which was about the Safety and
11 Awareness and Crime Prevention Program.

12 We know that members are recruited to engage in a
13 process to identify an issue of concern related to
14 safety and crime, and work to develop coordinated
15 prevention and intervention strategies. Can you
16 share what the process is to identify these issues,
17 and how you recruit individuals, and what does the
18 prevention and intervention strategies entail?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you for the
20 question. The Safety Prevention and Crime Awareness
21 Program-- Safety Awareness and Crime Prevention
22 Program is one that I'm actually pretty excited
23 about. I think in the main, our NDA programs focus
24 on individuals and families, and sort of accessing
25 some benefits. So, the fact that this program works-

2 - it works through providers-- we're used to that--
3 but the fact that the community rather than an
4 individual is what's being worked on is pretty
5 exciting, and-- and pretty welcome, I think,
6 particularly for a community action agency.

7 So, there's currently three providers that work
8 on this issue. And in operating the contract and
9 filing what's expected of them, they have to poll the
10 community. They have to enlist community residents
11 to identify what the highest priority need is going
12 to be. So, we have a bucket that says, either
13 "domestic violence" or "interpersonal conflict" may
14 have been the highest priority needed to have to
15 address, but the community has put their-- their
16 target on what is it they want to do.

17 I'm going to turn to Assistant Commissioner
18 Jordan Wilson, who could say a little bit more about
19 what's been unfolding.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON: Yes, good
21 morning. Um, so we have three programs, and each
22 program, the scope is kind of tailored to what is
23 happening in that specific community. So, the actual
24 community residents that are a part of the program,
25 they're the ones that basically drive what project

2 they want to work on, what is the-- the biggest issue
3 in their community related to public safety.

4 And so we have one program that focused on--
5 There was an area in their neighborhood that was not
6 lit well, and a lot of, you know, like a lot of
7 garbage. It wasn't, just, friendly to walk by. So,
8 what they did was basically painted a mural on the
9 wall to brighten up the space. And they also were
10 talking with, you know, other city agencies to talk
11 about getting better lighting. So that-- So each
12 program basically focuses on, for the year, like what
13 project they want to tackle that will kind of improve
14 safety conditions in their specific neighborhood.

15 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: And this is through the
16 NABs though, right?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON: This is
18 actually an actual NDA program.

19 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON: So, the
21 Neighborhood Advisory Boards, actually, in these
22 three neighborhoods, voted that this, based on the
23 needs assessment and the public hearings, that this
24 program was necessary for their communities.

25 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: So what communities?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON: So, it's
3 Far Rockaway, we have Bronx 7, and then we also have,
4 um [BACKGROUND VOICE] Yeah, yeah. So, Queensbridge.

5 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm. And so the
6 people who are a part of the program that are running
7 the actual like NDA program, were they NAB members,
8 or were they-- were they other members of the
9 community that were recruited?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Let me take that
11 one. Um, Councilmember, I want to draw a
12 distinction-- and I recognize sometimes DYCD and
13 other city agencies, we get caught up in a lot of
14 acronyms, right? So, the NABs are Neighborhood
15 Advisory Board members. And then, we draw a boundary
16 for each neighborhood that we're focusing on, and we
17 call those NDAs. That's the Neighborhood Development
18 Area.

19 The NABs, as I said earlier in my testimony,
20 those are volunteers that are working cooperatively
21 at DYCD to canvass the community, to hold the public
22 hearings, to determine the highest priority needs.
23 And then once we have that information, we again meet
24 with the NAB members at particular points in time to
25 say, "Okay, based on the money that's available, and

2 based on the highest priority needs you've
3 identified, you can fund these three or four program
4 areas." And then they will decide, "We want to throw
5 as much money as we can into these three, or these
6 four," right?

7 And then again, when we are procuring, they will
8 join us in reading the proposals, like, "You found
9 that this was the need. This is what we're going to
10 fund. These are the people who want to deliver the
11 services." And they're helping us write and score
12 proposals, so that we find the best provider that's
13 going to deliver that service in that community.

14 So, with regard to the program that the Assistant
15 Commissioner and I were just talking about, the
16 Safety and Crime, for those three neighborhoods where
17 this was one of the highest priority needs, we
18 identified a provider that that's going to work in
19 those neighborhoods. And part of that program design
20 is they have to enlist the community. They cannot
21 even attempt to try to solve the problem by
22 themselves, because it's a community problem. They
23 might invite NAB members, just like any other
24 residents of the community be part of solving the
25 problem. But not every program necessarily would--

2 would do that. This one might, because it's about
3 raising community awareness. You can pick up-- you
4 were saying about a mural? So, then once it was
5 identified that they want to work on a mural, then
6 who's going to do the mural, and everyone kind of
7 pitching in and working together on that.

8 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: So, do you have a
9 provider facilitating or coordinating the NDA project
10 in each community? Or do you only bring on a
11 provider once a project is identified?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We identify the
13 provider first. And then in the case of this
14 program, the provider has to, as part of their
15 service strategy, host whatever meetings need to
16 happen, and broker whatever alliances need to happen
17 to have the community identify and then work toward
18 designing whatever the solution is going to be.

19 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: And then providers are
20 selected by the same, like, procurement process?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: The same procurement
22 process, yes.

23 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. What are the
24 providers for the three programs?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: [TO ASSISTANT
3 COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON:] Do you remember offhand
4 who it is? Yep.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JORDAN-WILSON: So in the
6 Bronx, we have marshmallow Mosholu Montefiore, MMCC,
7 Community Center. Yeah. And then we have for Far
8 Rockaway, we have WAGs, so Wheelchairs Against Guns.
9 And then in Queensbridge, we have Jacob Riis.

10 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, I have more
11 questions, but... No, I just-- Because I know some
12 providers lost certain contracts. Like you mentioned
13 WAG in Far Rockaway, and I know there were other
14 providers that was that were in indulging in
15 different workarounds like crime and safety
16 prevention.

17 So, I'm just saying that-- these are all
18 different contracts, right? Like this isn't-- this
19 isn't the same as like a CMS or other types of
20 contracts that will come out? This is very specific
21 to this NDAA program focused on safety and crime
22 prevention, that's the proper name, right?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: That-- That's true,
24 but Council--

2 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Safety Awareness and
3 Crime Prevention Program.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: That's true,
5 Councilmember. But I want to add something. When
6 the priorities were identified and the programs were
7 defined, and when we went to procure for this, that
8 all proceeded when the Office of Neighborhood
9 Services was integrated into DYCD.

10 So, since that has happened and consistent with
11 what the Chair was saying earlier, like the left hand
12 wants to know what the right hand is doing, Ebony and
13 her team have been meeting with the ONS team.

14 So, when we think both about existing CMS work,
15 and also there's an array of strategies where we're
16 trying to grow similar work, we just-- I mean, we
17 just had two meetings two weeks ago, and three weeks
18 ago. We have another meeting next week, where we
19 want to pull these providers into -- not that they
20 aren't already, but -- a stronger coordinated
21 discussion with CMS providers when they are in
22 neighborhoods that overlap work that that's happening
23 In CMS and in--

24 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: So you are showing that-

25 -

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Oh, we are actively
3 talking about it. And then where the-- What's it?
4 Two of the three do, and one doesn't? Right?

5 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Some of these providers
6 have multiple contracts?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes, that's true.
8 So, because of the nature of this work, we want them
9 to wrap our arms around whoever else is in the
10 community. So, if they are CMS funded providers,
11 they should be part of their planning. And so for
12 the one that's in a neighborhood that isn't one of,
13 like, the target precincts right now, we still want
14 them to use the same methodologies, because that
15 could later on become part of the CMS work or related
16 work. So, we are in cross-pollination discussions
17 about this.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You know, and, and I
19 understand like, Ben, I know that you guys have been
20 trying really hard around like trying to get everyone
21 to work collaboratively and having the work be cross-
22 pollinating and all that. But, like, it just seems
23 so confusing, because this all seems very
24 overlapping, especially with the safety awareness and
25 crime prevention is-- is doing the same work, very

2 similar work that CMS is doing. And then we also
3 have the MAP program. Like, everyone is, like, doing
4 the same thing. And so I'm just-- We wouldn't have
5 so much cross-pollination, if we kind of, like, just
6 did the work and not, like, had all these different
7 providers in these different buckets. It just seems
8 very confusing. And then we have all the acronyms.
9 So, I feel like if I'm confused, I feel like other
10 people might be confused. And so I don't like things
11 that don't make sense. So, I really want us to,
12 like, as we're moving forward, think about how do we
13 get to a place where it's, like, kind of not, like,
14 all over the place. Because obviously we all have
15 the same goals, but I also think-- thinking about how
16 are we making sure that, like, if there's-- if these
17 are CMS groups, then how do we reach out to those
18 groups to kind I work with them to get these
19 contracts, and kind of streamline it that way?
20 Because then you have like, like Montefiore--
21 Mosholu is doing this Safety and Awareness and Crime
22 Prevention, but like, that's not what the work that
23 they've doing, right? Like, it's just-- it's just
24 all over the place.

2 And so I definitely want us to continue to think
3 about, like, as we're moving forward, how are we kind
4 of like streamlining it, and putting things in
5 buckets and like-- Because what happens is, and this
6 is the way that things have been for years with
7 nonprofits. We throw out these contracts, and
8 everybody applies for everything, right? And, like,
9 one of the things that I keep telling people is,
10 like, "When an administration changes that doesn't
11 mean that you have to now change your mission, your
12 vision, because we're chasing the dollar." And so we
13 have to do better, I think. Like, "Okay, well, what
14 is the work? Who's doing the work, how do we work
15 with these groups to continue to do this work or
16 strengthen it? Or moving on with things?" But it
17 just seems like it's just a lot. And it's-- The more
18 we're adding on to it, the bigger the mess I feel
19 like we're making, although we have good intentions.

20 I do not think I have any more questions right
21 now. But I think Councilmember Joseph has said it
22 earlier: I just really want to talk about, like,
23 with all of these programs, and specially this
24 portfolio specifically, I think that there's a lot of
25 good work there. But really, I would love to open it

2 up to you guys to just talk about how do you guys
3 think you can work with the Council to kind of uplift
4 these programs in a better way? And not just an app
5 and appointments, but like all of these things?
6 Because a lot of people just don't know about them.
7 And so just want to leave that with guys to be able
8 to talk about what the collaboration can look like
9 moving forward.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Thank you for that
11 final question. I think some of the things that we
12 talked about briefly, we should really invest in and
13 return to: The virtual briefing was excellent. I
14 think we want to routinize that. I think,
15 anecdotally, and I went to the Councilmembers (I
16 won't point to any particular local elected
17 official), I think, at times, people seem very
18 excited about the work. And then I'm not always
19 clear as to why they lose interest. But I would like
20 for us-- for our part for us to continue to be
21 consistent.

22 I agree with your Chair that even though these
23 programs have relatively less funding or smaller
24 funding than some of the City Techs, I feel they are
25 important programs, and we are looking to maximally

2 leverage the work that they can do. It has always
3 made sense to me. Commissioner Howard refers to CD
4 as "the other side of the house." So, we do all this
5 youth work, the work here that we do with
6 adolescents, adults, older adults is really very
7 hand-in-glove. So, if we can work together to share
8 that message. We're a year away from doing a whole
9 other community needs assessment. So, let's see what
10 we can do to really continue to raise the-- the
11 profile. And as always, we're happy to share the
12 impacts that we think we're having.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, definitely thinking
14 about it. We are a year out from the Community Needs
15 Assessments, which I'm definitely excited to be a
16 part of again, and make sure that we get it out. But
17 I think that that's one step and using this year, to
18 kind of get people up to date on what the community
19 assessment is--

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: I agree.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: --so, that when we do
22 launch it my office isn't the only one to do surveys,
23 right? And so thinking about how do we make sure
24 that in a year, all 51 members know about it, and are
25 a part of it, all the state electeds are part of it,

2 and know about, and are thinking about what we can do
3 to do that.

4 And also, a lot of these price points are low
5 because it does have to-- So, that means they are
6 going to be attached to some of the other things and
7 work that's going on throughout the city as far as
8 programming. So, thinking about how do we use those
9 programs to also uplift this work as well, because it
10 is very much needed.

11 And you guys are one of the secrets in-- in DYCD
12 that no one kind of talks about. But I told you I
13 wasn't going to forget about you.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes. Thank you for
15 spilling the beans and getting the secret out.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I did-- Listen, you know
17 sometimes you open that door, and you'll be like,
18 "All right, now close it, because I don't want people
19 to know what we're over here doing.

20 But Councilmember Williams has another question.
21 And then we'll go to the panel.

22 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah. I was trying to
23 see if you guys answered this already. But I know
24 you mentioned, you know, what constitutes as like a
25 functioning NAB. But I was interested in

2 understanding like, when you don't have a functioning
3 NAB, what happens to that community? Are you able to
4 still continue your work? What happens?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: We are able to still
6 continue the work. I mentioned the staffing pattern
7 right now. So the liaisons attend all of the NAB
8 meetings. And so just what we want is for every
9 board--

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Those poor four people have
11 to attend all the meetings?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes, they do.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All 41?

14 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: That's every week? Just
15 two people? How do they do--

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, my gosh.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: The staff have to
18 attend the meetings.

19 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Wait, they're not--

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: They have to ensure-

21 -

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They need a raise.

23 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: If they're not-- If
24 they're not functioning though, are they even having
25 meetings?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: No, I didn't say
3 they-- they weren't functioning. They are
4 functioning. What we consider viable is when a board
5 is healthy.

6 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: So, for instance, a
8 board ought to have someone who's serving as like the
9 Chair of the board, and somebody serving as the
10 secretary of the board. You don't want the same
11 person to have to do all the things, right? The
12 liaisons will step in if there's a need for them to
13 step in. But mainly what we want them to do is to
14 empower the volunteers. Not every volunteer knows
15 Robert's Rules of Order. But if the liaison knows of
16 it, "This is how you do this. This is how you do
17 that." That sort of thing.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How often do they meet?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: At least quarterly.
20 It depends on whether it's a Community Needs
21 Assessment year. So 2022, and again next year
22 they'll meet much more often. But at least
23 quarterly.

24 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Four times a year, each
25 one?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Four times a year,
3 each one, yeah.

4 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Is it like-- Are notes
5 available from the meetings? Like Community Boards
6 are mandated-- Is it the same level of-- Like, if I
7 didn't-- if I never attended a NAB meeting, could I
8 know what was discussed and...

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes. We can-- We
10 can share that with you.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is that public knowledge?
12 Like, is it on the website or something like that?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yeah, they're on the
14 website. Both the NAB announcements of meetings, and
15 the cabinet announcements of meetings, and then the--
16 I have to check if all the-- I don't want to say
17 anything. I'm out of my depth. Yup, all the
18 meetings are published on the website, for sure. And
19 we can also share via YouTube the Committee Action
20 Board meetings.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh. It's on YouTube. [TO

22 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS:] Are you done? [TO DEPUTY

23 COMMISSIONER BOBBIT:] _____ with the Community

24 Action Board?

25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Each neighborhood
3 advisory board focuses on a particular community.
4 DYCD also has a central board that's a tripartite
5 board that has some representatives, local elected
6 officials, and the private sector. But half of the
7 board on our Community Action Board are people who
8 are representing a range of NAB's. And so those
9 neighborhoods sort of vote them up to be on our
10 Community Action Board.

11 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: So are there two boards?
12 There is a Community Action Board, and there's a
13 Central Board? Or is the Community Action Board the
14 Central Board?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: The Community Action
16 Board is the Central Board.

17 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Oh, okay.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: So, we have
19 Neighborhood Advisory Boards, but we also have a
20 Community Action Board. That's also required by the
21 federal statute to have a tripartite board.

22 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: There's one Community
23 Action Board for all of--

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: There's one
25 Community Action Board.

2 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: And there's NAB members
3 and others that funnel into the Community Action
4 Board.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: That's correct.

6 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Across the city?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This is good clarification.

9 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: [inaudible]

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I mean-- These-- I
11 just wanted to say those are real questions, because
12 I told you: They don't know. I've been calling
13 offices.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: I will re-send our
15 frequently answered question sheet that we have that
16 that also spells out how both the Community Action
17 Board and the Neighborhood Advisory Board Members...

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes. Please email that to
19 me again, and I will email it out to all of my
20 colleagues today.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBIT: Happy to. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you guys so much. We
24 do have some testimony. Hopefully you guys can stay
25 around to hear some of it.

2 And I will turn it over to Christina so she can
3 take it from here.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right, thank you Chair.

5 We will now turn to public testimony. We will be
6 limiting public testimony today to three minutes
7 each. For in-person panelists please come up to the
8 table once your name has been called. Our first in-
9 person panel will be Ira Yankwitt, Maria Ferreira,
10 Anna Kaganova, and Dionis Fernandez.

11 You can begin when ready

12 MR. YANKWITT: Good morning, Chair Stevens. My
13 name is Ira Yankwitt, and I'm the Executive Director
14 of the Literacy Assistance Center, a 41-year-old
15 nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening and
16 expanding the adult education system and to advancing
17 adult literacy as a foundation for equal opportunity
18 and social justice.

19 As you know, and as you've just been discussing,
20 DYCD currently has an open RFP that will fund
21 community based organizations to lead adult basic
22 education, high school equivalency, and English for
23 Speakers of Other language programs for the next
24 three to six years.

2 DYCD has structured this RFP to prioritize
3 residents of the highest poverty lowest educational
4 attainment most limited English proficient
5 neighborhoods in the city. We unequivocally support
6 this goal

7 Unfortunately, the way DYCD has structured the
8 RFP through a two-tier funding competition could
9 effectively render up to 70% of the current community
10 based adult literacy providers non-competitive,
11 forcing them to close their classes and displace
12 1000s of the very students that DYCD is aiming to
13 serve. We are very grateful to you Councilmember
14 Stevens as well as to Councilmembers Won and Avilés,
15 and the 38 other Councilmembers who signed on to your
16 letter, urging DYCD to revise this counterproductive
17 competition model and to expand the proposal
18 deadline.

19 The irony is that while DYCD wants to address
20 neighborhoods with the highest needs, the \$11.85
21 million in funding in this RFP is \$5 million less
22 than the \$16.83 million in the current
23 administration-side funding for DYCD adult literacy
24 contracts in FY 24. This means that this RFP will
25 serve just over 9100 students annually, a significant

2 decrease from the 16,000 that DYCD just reported and
3 less than one half of 1% of the 2.2 million adult New
4 Yorkers in need.

5 At the same time, the mayor's preliminary budget
6 for FY 25 includes \$21.7 million for DYCD adult
7 literacy, nearly \$10 million, or nearly 85% more than
8 what is currently included in the RFP. If this
9 additional funding could get baselined and included
10 in the RFP, DYCD could do some combination of the
11 following three things. First, you could increase
12 the per student funding rate, which would make it
13 more realistic for smaller organizations -- those
14 that don't have additional sources of revenue to
15 supplement the DYCD funding -- to apply under this
16 RFP, and to be able to provide more comprehensive
17 services. Second, it could increase the number of
18 neighborhood tabulation areas designated for funding
19 and increase the number of students served through
20 this RFP. And third, it could create a second non-
21 NTA based competition for providers who wish to run
22 borough wide and or city wide programs and increase
23 the number of students served through this RFP.

24 With the march 20 deadline for organizations to
25 submit proposals fast approaching, we urge the

2 committee to get clarity on the funding and push for
3 a baselining of the full \$21.7 million, as well as to
4 continue to push to fix the competition model and
5 extend the deadline further. Thank you for your
6 attention.

7 MR. FERNANDEZ: Hello, my name is Dionis
8 Fernandez. I have a movement called Fathers Pickup
9 for fathers that are fighting to be part of their
10 children's life. I just did a nonprofit organization
11 and my 501C. What I do is I go to all the five
12 boroughs, and I speak to fathers that have been going
13 to court, paying child support, hiring lawyers, and
14 we still don't get the justice we deserve to be part
15 of our children's life. I've got three years
16 fighting to see my child, going to court, and they're
17 not giving me the right that I deserve and there's a
18 lot of fathers out there paying child support, and we
19 don't know where the money is going, we should have
20 like a food stamp sample so, we know the money is
21 being given to our child, not the mom using the money
22 doing her hair and things like that.

23 The law just changed in Florida that fathers and
24 mothers, single, divorced, still could have on joint
25 custody. It is going into effect on July 1, and I

2 believe that we should be able to do this here
3 because it's very important for the children to have
4 their fathers in their life.

5 When you go to court they are always talking
6 about the mother and the father, and they're not able
7 to co-parent. So, it's supposed to be what's in the
8 best interest of the child. But they always talking
9 about mom and father issues, which that is the past,
10 they're not working things out. So they always going
11 to be talking about them instead of talking about the
12 child, because we missing being in our children's
13 life. We are fighting to do everything we can. We
14 get no type of visitations, phone calls, and fathers
15 are going through this for years, and it's tough for
16 us to change this, and for us to be part of our
17 children's life because we are fathers and we are
18 great fathers, and we deserve to be heard, and we
19 deserve to get the 50/50 joint custody, the same as
20 the mother, because it's important for the mother to
21 be there. So as the Father too. Thank you

22 MS. KAGANOVA: Hello, Councilmember Stevens,
23 thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to
24 share this important testimony about our very
25 successful Healthy Families Program. My name is Anna

2 Kaganova, and I'm representing Center for Family Life
3 in Sunset Park. We are a neighborhood based social
4 services organization that provides services in South
5 Park, Brooklyn, CD-7. Our programs include a wide--
6 a wide range of wraparound supports ranging from food
7 pantry, benefits access, immigration and
8 nonimmigration legal services, employment and job
9 placement supports, ESOL, cooperative business
10 development, after-school and youth development,
11 among others, serving 15,000 people in a year.

12 Sunset Park, our neighborhood, is a low-income
13 immigrant community, with many immigrant families
14 hailing from Latino-- Latin American, Asian, Middle
15 Eastern, and Russian-speaking countries. Many
16 immigrants in our neighborhood lack the language
17 skills and familiarity with American systems, which
18 make it challenging for them to assimilate to life in
19 the United States. Our NDA Healthy Families Program
20 provides case management, educational workshops,
21 service navigation supports to our clients, offering
22 them the invaluable guidance and orientation which
23 help ensure that families are able to receive
24 stability.

2 Our program serves-- Has served in the prior
3 years, over 70 people each year and this year we
4 intend to serve 106 people. The supports in our
5 program include job readiness, job placement, help
6 obtaining identification, benefits access, help
7 obtaining health insurance, housing referrals,
8 workshops on tenants, immigrants, and workers rights,
9 financial literacy workshops, and individual
10 counseling, among others, as well as help navigating
11 public systems including the healthcare and education
12 system.

13 These wraparound supportive services offered
14 through our Healthy Families Program serve to address
15 multiple issues faced by families providing greater
16 overall stability and well-being to the families we
17 serve. Our services are also provided in a
18 culturally and linguistically competent manner by
19 bilingual and bicultural staff, ensuring that all
20 services are appropriate and relevant to our clients.

21 In face of the current migrant crisis, we have
22 served over 2000 asylum seekers at the Center for
23 Family Life, and we have witnessed the exponentially
24 increasing need for support in New York among from
25 both long term residents and new arrivals. This--

2 Our Healthy Families Program is an incredibly
3 valuable resource, again in this face of compounded
4 growing need for social services in the city, and it
5 helps families receive enhanced stability and well-
6 being, creating a ripple effect in the community that
7 makes it overall more resilient and thriving. Hence,
8 this is a very important necessary program.

9 Thank you so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I do have a couple of
11 questions for the panel. I guess I'll start with
12 adult literacy.

13 One. Thank you. Because I love that your
14 testimony has solutions to some of the problems, and
15 you laid them out very nicely. But um, I guess for--
16 As you can see, some of my questions in the hearing
17 was just more about, like, the data that they're
18 using for the in FTEs, or whatever they're calling
19 it. It was-- It is old data, and thinking about how,
20 you know, we have this asylum crisis going on in the
21 city. What are some suggestions? Because it was
22 kind of alluded to that there is limited resources
23 with that. But what are your suggestions around
24 that? Because I know that, like, it talks about like
25 the NAC's designated funding increasing the NFTs.

2 But if there is limited funding, one of the issues we
3 had before with the-- when we released our-- before
4 was that the price point was too low. So, can you
5 talk a little bit about that?

6 MR. YANKWITT: Sure. So, as you pointed out, in
7 your conversation with Deputy Commissioner Bobbit
8 that, not only is the data going back three years, I
9 think, he said, to 2021, at it's-- at its most
10 recent. But also this RFP is three years with a
11 three-year extension, which will almost certainly be
12 exercised by DYCD. Given its history. So, we're now
13 looking at data from 2017 to 2021 that is going to be
14 used to determine what neighborhoods programs are in
15 in potentially 2029 or 2030.

16 So, we already know that data that goes back
17 three years is likely out of date, right?, given--
18 given displacement, gentrification, and of course,
19 the influx of-- of new asylum seekers.

20 So, I'm very concerned about this as a model.
21 While obviously I really applaud and share the goal
22 of targeting limited funding. And I think that if we
23 were starting from scratch, and there were no
24 community-based organizations that were currently
25 being funded to provide these services, and you said,

2 "Look, Ira, we have limited dollars. Now we can
3 argue whether or not we should have limited dollars,
4 if they're really limited dollars, but that's our
5 starting point. And we want to focus on the highest
6 poverty, lowest educational attainment, most limited
7 English proficient residents of New York City to get
8 them the classes that they need. The way we're going
9 to do that is we're going to look at the best data we
10 have, which is the NTA data, and we're going to
11 target those neighborhoods."

12 If we were starting from scratch in that
13 hypothetical scenario, this might make sense. But
14 the reality is we are not starting from scratch,
15 right? We are starting with a pre-existing system
16 that has, high-quality, high-impact adult literacy
17 providers all over the city right now, right? We
18 also know that the nature of adult literacy students
19 is that they don't necessarily want to, or are not
20 necessarily able to attend school in the
21 neighborhoods that they live in. Some of them want
22 to attend classes closer to where they work, or where
23 they have family that can provide childcare, or maybe
24 they're just interested in going to classes with
25

2 people from different neighborhoods of the city, as
3 many of us are when we choose to go to a class.

4 So, the-- the-- I think what DYCD is doing, is
5 it's undermining its own goals. It is certainly true
6 that after the initial RFP, where they said only
7 providers that had-- that were located in the NTAs,
8 could even apply, and we saw that 18 of the NTAs
9 didn't even have obvious providers or organizations
10 that could provide the services that they said,
11 "Okay, we will," as the Deputy Commissioner said,
12 "open up the application to any provider, as long as
13 they target one of the NTAs." The problem is, if you
14 are not currently located in the NTA, you are not
15 even, as we understand it, considered for funding if
16 there is a provider within the NTA.

17 So, this becomes a real deterrent for any current
18 providers to apply, right? I don't necessarily know
19 if there is a provider, a potential provider, in the
20 NTA that I'm closest to also. What if I'm between
21 NTAs? Which one am I supposed to apply for? Or
22 maybe there's one a little further away, and I know
23 there are no providers there? Can I apply for them?
24 They are creating a complication that they don't
25 need. What they-- What they can just simply do is

2 open up the competition to any provider who wants to
3 apply, and then they can include geographic
4 considerations in their evaluation method. It's not
5 at all clear to me how this two-tier system helps and
6 serves their cause.

7 And of course, the irony is that in the name of
8 equity and justice, they actually are putting \$5
9 million less into this funding than they had this
10 year, and going from 16,000 students to 9,100
11 students, when we have a need of about 2.2 million
12 adults. So, it's-- it's a little ironic that this is
13 all in the name of equity and justice.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean, even thinking
15 about it, as you were talking, I'm like, "Dang, I
16 should have asked the question: Are they-- When
17 they were considering this, are they looking at areas
18 where we're building up?" Right? Because we are in
19 a whole housing crisis, right? And there are areas
20 that are being built up that obviously aren't a part
21 of the NTAs now, but might become because we have the
22 influx of affordable housing going into these areas.
23 So I-- So we have to ask that question. Let's email
24 that to them as well. Or if you can take it back for
25 me. Because I think that that is going to-- I want

2 to understand how to-- how was that taken into
3 consideration, especially when we have the City Of
4 Yes going on as well.

5 But like I told them, this is going to be an
6 ongoing conversation, obviously, for us, for the next
7 couple of weeks.

8 I did have a question for the young man with the
9 Father's Initiative: Have you taken advantage of any
10 of the services that DYCD is offering with their
11 father's initiatives, and have you worked
12 collaboratively with them at all?

13 MR. FERNANDEZ: No, I--

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You have to turn your mic
15 on.

16 MR. FERNANDEZ: No. I just started this movement
17 now. I got a big platform. So, what I do is I just
18 go to the five boroughs, and the fathers have been
19 doing everything they can, as fathers. What I do is
20 I make an interview about what they're going through.
21 We don't talk about the mother, we just talk about
22 how we are fathers, and everything we are doing to be
23 there for our children, and we still are not able to
24 get the justice we deserve.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. I would love to see
3 how we can connect you with the work that they're
4 doing, with the Fathers Initiatives, and what you're
5 doing, because it definitely sounds like there's some
6 overlap there as well. And I know that there's like
7 a whole bunch of organizations doing, you know, not
8 necessarily that piece, but like, I know, like,
9 Councilmember Riley, he's part of The Dad Gang and
10 all those things. And I would love to just see how
11 all of those things could be integrated. Because it
12 is true, we often talk about the mom and-- and don't
13 talk about the dad, and want to make sure that we're
14 highlight that.

15 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yeah. So-- So what's going on
16 now is like, let's say if the child is 14 or 15 years
17 old, and he's able to reach out to his father. So,
18 what kids are doing when they get that age, they want
19 to reach out to their father to see why he wasn't in
20 my life, and now the fathers are showing proof, "I've
21 been trying to be in your life, but they just not
22 giving me the justice." So, now a lot of kids are
23 being mad at the mother. They don't want to be with
24 the mother, and they just want to be with the father
25 for taking his right away to be with his dad.

2 So, we need to do something about this because I
3 believe is very important for children to have their
4 fathers in their life. And when you go to court is
5 supposed to be, "What is in the best interest of the
6 child?" But like I said, they always talk about Mom
7 and Dad problem. And if we're not able to work
8 things out we are always going to make one look
9 badder than the other. So, I just want it to be
10 about: What can we do so we could both just be able
11 to be there for our children? Mom and dad.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely.

13 MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I think we're all on the
15 same page. But I don't have any more questions for
16 this panel. Thank you all for being here. I really
17 appreciate your time, and your effort and your energy
18 and the work that you're doing. Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to this
20 panel. That concludes our in-person testimony. We
21 will now transition to remote testimony. For virtual
22 panelists once your name is called, a member of our
23 staff will unmute you and the Sergeant At Arms will
24 set the timer and give you the go ahead to begin.

2 Our first panelist will be Ursula Cooper-Hunter.
3 Ursula, you may begin when the Sergeant starts your
4 clock.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

6 MS. COOPER-HUNTER: Okay, good morning. It is
7 still morning? Yes. Good morning, City
8 Councilmember Stevens, and the ,Committee Children
9 and Youth Committee. I am the Department Director
10 for BronxWorks Children and Youth Department, and we
11 certainly appreciate the opportunity to submit
12 written testimony to the committee on children and
13 youth. BronxWorks was founded in 1972. The
14 BronxWorks mission is to improve the economic and
15 social well-being of low income individuals and
16 families. We feed, shelter, teach, and support our
17 neighbors to build a stronger community. BronxWorks
18 currently has the following DYCD children and youth
19 programs. We have five COMPASS afterschool programs,
20 three SONYC, two high school afterschool programs,
21 one of them being an NDA program at on the Adlai
22 Stevenson-- at the Adlai Stevenson campus, a WIOA
23 program as well, as three Cornerstones, and a summer
24 youth employment contract for 1300 young people
25 during the summers.

2 So, we certainly appreciate the DYCD Children and
3 Youth funding and it is in alignment with the
4 BronxWorks mission to teach and support our
5 neighbors.

6 However, during the past-- during-- during this
7 post-pandemic era, it has become increasingly
8 apparent that a higher participant reimbursement rate
9 is needed. This will enhance DYCD programming to
10 allow programs to better serve our youth population.
11 And some of the areas that would be important to
12 program enhancements would be things like swimming
13 programs, so that our inner city youth can have
14 swimming instruction, enhanced literacy and STEAM
15 programming, social workers to support and address
16 social and emotional needs-- the social and emotional
17 needs of youth, budgets which accommodate a floor
18 salary of \$22 an hour and \$25 an hour during the
19 summer for group leaders and youth workers, and
20 increase salary rates for instructors and program
21 leaders, and a 12-month contract to-- as opposed to a
22 separate summer contract which will allow
23 organizations to better plan and budget.

24 In terms of the NDA something that we've
25 experienced during the most recent NDA RFP where we

2 were-- the priority areas shifted. And, so as a
3 result we areas where we had some high school
4 programming the priority was no longer academic
5 support for high schools. And as a result some of
6 the high schools that we had to leave-- the high
7 schools we had to leave were pretty upset and
8 disappointed because the need-- even though their
9 priority area--

10 [BELL RINGS]

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time has
12 expired.

13 MS. COOPER-HUNTER: Oh. Okay, I can share my
14 written-- I can share the rest of it. Thank you for
15 your time.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to those panelists.
17 This concludes our remote testimony. If we missed
18 anyone who would like to testify virtually, please
19 use the raise hand function in Zoom and we will call
20 on you in the order of hands raised. Additionally, I
21 will call those who registered to testify remotely to
22 see if they are online at this time. Cherlie
23 Febrier, Omayra Deleon, and Chakra Sergeant?

24 MS. FEVRIER: Good morning. Good morning. My
25 name is Cherlie. I am a provider of health and

2 family services that provides services within NDA
3 area 17. Our organization is dedicated to supporting
4 seniors and their families and accessing in better
5 resources and navigating housing challenges.

6 Our NDA program offers a range of services
7 including housing, counseling, and family support,
8 facilitating access to affordable housing, SNAP
9 benefits, and Medicaid.

10 Through our proactive outreach approach, we
11 engage with families to inform them of their tenant
12 rights, and provide assistance and response and
13 landlord-tenant disputes. We prioritize ensuring
14 that families have access to adequate stability in
15 their apartments, advocating on their behalf to
16 uphold the housing standards.

17 Additionally, we streamline the application
18 process for public assistance programs, offering
19 translation assistance in Haitian Creole to overcome
20 language barriers and ensure equitable access to
21 services. By-- By accommodating families from
22 diverse backgrounds, we strive to create an inclusive
23 environment where everyone can access the support
24 they need. Our commitment to empowering families
25 extends beyond immediate assistance. We work with

2 self-advocacy workshops to enhance their skills and
3 promote self-reliance, equipping them with the tools
4 to navigate future challenges independently. The
5 current funding from the Department of Youth and
6 Community Development is crucial-- is critical to
7 sustaining and expanding our services. With
8 additional resources, we can continue to provide
9 professional support to seniors and their families,
10 ultimately fostering greater self-reliance and
11 resilience within our community.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

13 Okay, if there's no one else that would like to
14 testify remotely, I would like to note that written
15 testimony, which will be reviewed in full by
16 committee staff, may be submitted to the record up to
17 72 hours after the close of this hearing by emailing
18 it to testimony@counsel.nyc.gov.

19 And I will turn it to the Chair for closing
20 statements.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would like to say that
22 I'm really excited that we were able to do this
23 hearing today, just because these are programs that I
24 think definitely can supplement a lot of the work
25 that we continuously fight about, but don't get a lot

2 of attention. I definitely want to make sure that we
3 continue to push and talk about adult literacy.

4 I'm very concerned about the RFP that was just
5 released and-- and want to make sure that we can get
6 that to a place that makes the most sense and most
7 equitable and conserve as many people as possible.

8 The father initiative is another initiative that
9 I really want us to make sure that we're uplifting,
10 and people know about this program to ensure that
11 fathers across the city has support and access.

12 And we want to continue to just make sure that
13 especially when we're talking about community safety
14 and awareness and crime prevention, that we're not
15 duplicating services, and that we're doing things
16 that are more streamlined and more collaborative, and
17 making sure that things are always making sense. And
18 so I know that DYCD is making great efforts to be
19 more collaborative and streamline processes, but
20 let's continue to push that work and have that
21 conversation.

22 And with that, this hearing is adjourned.

23 [GAVEL]

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1 COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date 05/06/2024