

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Jointly with the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND
RECREATION

And the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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Monday, May 22, 2023

Start: 10:45 a.m.

Recess: 5:34 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers, City Hall

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan, Chairperson
Shekar Krishnan, Chairperson
Rita C. Joseph, Chairperson

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Nantasha M. Williams
Sandra Ung
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Susan Donoghue
Commissioner
Department of Parks And Recreation

Matthew Drury
Director of Government Relations
Department of Parks And Recreation

Jennifer Greenfeld
Deputy Commissioner
Environment and Planning
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David Banks
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Seritta Scott
Chief Financial Officer
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Christina Foti
Chief Of Special Education
New York City Public Schools

Sarah Kleinhandler
Chief Enrollment Officer
New York City Public Schools

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
3 today's New York City Council Executive Budget
4 hearing for the Committee on Finance, joint with
5 Parks and Recreation, joint with Education. At this
6 time, please silence all electronic devices. Just a
7 reminder: No one may approach the dais at any.during
8 this hearing. Chairs, we are ready to begin.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Sergeant. Okay.
10 Good morning and welcome to the 10th day of FY 24
11 executive budget hearings. We're going to begin
12 today with the Department of Parks and Recreation.
13 I'm councilmember Justin Brannan. I chair the
14 Committee on Finance. I'm pleased to be joined today
15 by my colleague and good friend, Councilmember
16 Krishnan, Chair of the Committee on Parks and
17 Recreation. We've also been joined this morning by
18 Councilmembers Marte, Ossé, Barron, Brooks-Powers,
19 Brewer, Lee, Dinowitz, Louis, Ayala, Velázquez, Moya,
20 and Holden.

21 Welcome Commissioner Donahue and your team.
22 Matt, good to see you. Thank you for joining us
23 today to answer our questions. Just to set the
24 table: On April 26 2023, the administration released
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2 their executive financial plan for FY 23 to 27 with a
3 proposed FY 24 budget of \$106.7 billion.

4 Parks Department's proposed FY 24 budget of
5 \$610.4 million represents roughly 0.6% of the
6 administration's proposed FY 24 budget in the
7 executive plan. This is an increase of \$27.7
8 million, or 4.8% from the \$582.7 million originally
9 allocated in the FY 24 prelim plan. This increase is
10 mostly due to adjustments for the DC 37 Collective
11 Bargaining Agreement, the Central Park Conservancy
12 contract increases, and adding several baseline
13 positions.

14 My questions today will largely focus on the
15 department's PEGs along with the state of the PEP
16 officers. Our open spaces have always been vital-- a
17 vital resource to our city and COVID only pushed
18 their importance to an even higher level. We need to
19 ensure that these assets are properly maintained and
20 patrolled, so all New Yorkers can feel safe to enjoy
21 them in generations to come. I want to turn now to
22 my co chair for this hearing councilmember Krishnan
23 for his opening statement.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Chair
25 Brannon. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to

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2 today's joint hearing of the City Council Committee
3 on Finance and the Committee on Parks and Recreation
4 on the FY 20 for the executive budget for the
5 Department of Parks and Recreation. My name is
6 Shekar Krishnan and I'm the Chair of the Committee on
7 Parks and Recreation, and I would like to thank all
8 the fellow council members who are here today. I
9 think also Councilmember Nantasha Williams has joined
10 us as well. And thank you for recognizing everyone
11 Chair Brannan.

12 Today, we will be hearing testimony from the
13 Department of Parks and Recreation on its fiscal 2024
14 executive budget, which totals \$610.4 million, a
15 decrease of \$13.8 million since adoption of last
16 year. However, the FY 24 executive budget represents
17 a \$36.9 million decrease from the FY 23 executive
18 budget for Parks, which totals \$647.3 million at this
19 time. This is still nowhere near the 1% of the
20 budget that Mayor Adams campaigned on and explicitly
21 promised. We have seen reduction after reduction and
22 the loss of funding that we fought for last year in
23 achieving the largest budget for our parks department
24 in its history. Now, we are regressing and stepping
25 backward. Despite Mayor Adams stated commitment

2 repeatedly to achieve 1% or \$1 billion for our city's
3 budget for parks, what we are seeing is a decrease in
4 the amount of funding.

5 Now we have been clear in prior parks hearings as
6 well in over the last four decades, apart from the
7 work that we've done last year, there has been a
8 systematic disinvestment in our parks by government,
9 a decrease steadily of public dollars being put
10 towards our parks, whereas other major cities
11 throughout the country -- LA, Washington, DC,
12 Minneapolis, Chicago -- all not only devote more than
13 1% of their budget to parks, but spend more per
14 capita. As the New Yorkers For Parks and Play Fair
15 Coalition report pointed out, these major cities, our
16 peer cities, spend more per capita on their parks and
17 greenspace than we do as New York. We are behind.
18 We are behind other cities across this country. And
19 we have not seen the investments that this
20 administration has explicitly promised for our parks,
21 despite knowing that our parks and green spaces, as
22 we've seen during this pandemic are crucial, not just
23 as places for recreation, but for our mental health,
24 for our public health, and our well being.

2 At what point are we-- At what point is City Hall
3 going to treat our parks and green spaces and invest
4 in them as the essential spaces that they are? We as
5 New Yorkers deserve far more for our green spaces and
6 access to quality green spaces.

7 As part of these PEGs, we have seen over 100
8 positions reduced since budget adoption last year in
9 our parks department. To some, these PEGs are
10 supposedly just ways for the administration to alter
11 its budget and right-size spending. But to me and to
12 many of my colleagues, I think of the people who will
13 be unable to find work because the administration is
14 unwilling to work with the Parks Department and our
15 City Council to fill vacant positions. Seared in my
16 mind, or the images and the conversations I've had
17 with numerous parks workers over the last two years,
18 who are fearful of what these kinds of budget cuts
19 and disinvestments mean for their positions. And as
20 I've said, we do not have a park system in New York
21 City without investments in our workers. Our parks
22 workers of the beating hearts of our park system.
23 And each of these so called right sizes to the budget
24 directly impact and harm the ability of our parks

2 workers to do the phenomenal job they do every single
3 day for our green spaces.

4 For example, one cut that I find particularly
5 upsetting is the \$8 million PEG in FY 24 and the out
6 years related to the Parks Opportunity Program. This
7 is a work program for New Yorkers on cash assistance,
8 who clean parks and playgrounds. Sadly, DPR will be
9 cutting spots in this program due to these PEGs.

10 The fiscal year 2024 executive budget includes
11 \$16.3 million in new needs for FY 24 as well as \$31.5
12 million in other adjustments, as well as a savings of
13 \$20.1 million as part of the most recent round of
14 PEGs.

15 There are several new knees which add 112 new
16 baseline positions, including six new positions
17 related to the NYC sparks program, which guides young
18 women into career paths related to science,
19 technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.
20 However, missing from this budget-- executive budget
21 proposal is the 1000 new positions that were included
22 in the council's preliminary budget response, a call
23 for 1000 city parks workers baselined positions, or
24 permanent positions. The 112 new positions is a
25 start, but it's nowhere near where the need is, that

2 the parks department has to invest in its workers.
3 These new positions are vital not only to the health,
4 well-being, and maintenance of our parks, but also to
5 the workers themselves. Because as I see it, our
6 parks budget is fundamentally a worker's budget.

7 Recently, a DC 37 member, an associate urban park
8 ranger, Ralph Baselice wrote to my office
9 highlighting not only his dedication to serving our
10 park system, which he has done for nearly two
11 decades, but also asking for the Council to push for
12 the 1000 new baselined positions in the department.

13 He wrote to me that he speaks with many
14 colleagues and mentees who are worried each spring
15 about whether their lines will be restored in the
16 coming year. And each year as a City Council, we
17 fight to restore these one-shot positions.

18 Our urban park rangers, our dedicated parks
19 workers deserve stable positions, as Ralph said. And
20 you know what? He is absolutely right. The Council-
21 - And that's why the Council has made our call for
22 1000 new permanent baselined positions to ensure that
23 dedicated parks workers like Ralph and his colleagues
24 have stable positions where they can grow and thrive

2 and not be worried every year about whether their
3 position will continue into the following budget.

4 We hope that the Administration will heed this
5 call as well and work with the council to achieve
6 these 1000 new positions in the adopted budget. It
7 represents philosophically for this City Council a
8 very deliberate effort to say that going from budget
9 to budget, to fight for one shot or temporary
10 positions that each year we have to battle with
11 Administration to restore isn't the way to support
12 our park system. We need investments in permanent
13 positions, permanent full time lines, so that we
14 don't have to do this every single year when it comes
15 to the budget.

16 Our urban park rangers are included in that
17 investment. They care for our parks be engaged with
18 their families, our children. They show the way in
19 which our green spaces are connected to our climate
20 every single day in parks across the city. Yes every
21 year, I've had conversations with them because they
22 are deeply concerned about whether their lines will
23 be renewed in the following budget, because these
24 lines are not permanent positions.

2 The Parks Committee looks forward to hearing
3 about the executive budget specifically related to
4 lifeguards -- as we face a lifeguard crisis in this
5 city -- going into the next pool season, climbers and
6 pruners, and the recent DC 37 collective bargaining
7 agreement.

8 Before we hear from the department and testimony
9 from our Commissioner, I will now ask the Committee
10 Counsel to go over some procedural items and swear in
11 the representatives from the Parks Department. Thank
12 you all very much and welcome to today's hearing.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you chair. We've
14 also been joined by Councilmembers Carr, Fariás,
15 Restler, Hanks, and Ung. Before we turn it over to
16 Mike Twomey to swear in, I want to also thank Mike
17 Sherman, Monica Saloty, and Nia Hyatt from Council
18 Finance for helping prepare for today's hearings
19 behind the scene. Mike?

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

25 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: I do.

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2 COUNSEL: Matt Drury?

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: I do.

4 COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

5 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Okay, good morning Chair
6 Brannon, Chair Krishnan, members of the Finance
7 Committee, and Parks Committee, and other members of
8 the Council. My name is Sue Donoghue. I'm pleased
9 to be here today testifying as the Commissioner of
10 the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation
11 and to be joined on this panel by several members of
12 our agencies senior leadership.

13 Firstly, I want to thank the Council for its
14 continued support for our city's open spaces over the
15 past year and for championing the importance of parks
16 for all New Yorkers. Thank you for allowing us the
17 opportunity to discuss the agency's executive budget
18 for fiscal year 2024, and to provide an overview of
19 our agency's mission to build and maintain a
20 restorative and thriving park system.

21 The arrival of warmer weather in the spring means
22 we're heading into our peak season, when our city's
23 green and open spaces truly come alive, and more and
24 more people get outdoors to take advantage of our
25 amazing parks, to lead healthier, happier lives. And

2 we've been busy delivering results for New Yorkers.

3 In just the last two months, we completed a \$41
4 million renovation of Starlight Park in the Bronx,
5 closing a former gap in the Bronx River Greenway, and
6 converting 2.7 acres of formerly paved industrial
7 property into a beautiful green space with added
8 Greenway connections for everyone to enjoy. And also
9 completed an important wetlands restoration at Hook
10 Creek Park in Southeast Queens, replenishing sand and
11 adding native plants to preserve and protect this
12 breathtaking natural habitat for birds and other
13 wildlife.

14 We began construction on renovations to Captain
15 Dermody Triangle in Bayside Queens, which will
16 provide new ADA-accessible entrances, expanded curbs,
17 and new trees to this small-but-beloved open space,
18 which commemorates the memory of an abolitionist and
19 civil war hero.

20 We're continuing to improve and activate our
21 parks through initiatives like Park Poems, five new
22 art installations in parks around the city that
23 incorporate the literal text of poems into site-
24 specific works of public art, inviting park goers to

2 take a moment to pause, contemplate, and enjoy their
3 beautiful surroundings.

4 Our Green Thumb Community Garden Division hosted
5 the 39th annual Grow Together Conference to celebrate
6 the start of the gardening season, offering the
7 opportunity for 1000 New York City community
8 gardeners to network, exchange ideas about best
9 practices, and enjoy a variety of lectures, talks
10 tutorials, giving these dedicated stewards more
11 resources to help improve their local green spaces in
12 partnership with our agency.

13 Of course, our busy season means we're also
14 gearing up for the opening of our beaches and pools
15 so that millions of New Yorkers can stay cool and
16 have fun all summer long.

17 As we have discussed with the Council, despite a
18 national lifeguards shortage that has continued to
19 limit public access to pools and cities across the
20 country, we're doing all that we can to recruit and
21 train as many lifeguards as possible.

22 We're fortunate that here in New York City, we
23 were able to open all of our pools and beaches this
24 last summer, and we're committed to doing that again,
25 this summer, that we are clearly still facing a very

2 challenging hiring environment. Because we very much
3 understand the grave importance of teaching the next
4 generation to swim for health and safety, and in
5 order to build a pipeline for the next generation of
6 lifeguards, we were happy to recently announce that
7 we will be bringing Learn-to-Swim classes and parks-
8 hosted summer camp programming back to a small subset
9 of our outdoor pools this summer in a limited
10 capacity.

11 Turning to the specific topic of this hearing:
12 For the fiscal year, 2024 executive budget reflects
13 the administration's ongoing commitment to promoting
14 an equitable recovery by making investments in a
15 greener, healthier city and gives our agency the
16 resources we need to get the job done, while
17 demonstrating fiscal responsibility amid the ongoing
18 economic and fiscal challenges facing the city.

19 New York City Parks fiscal 2024 executive expense
20 operating budget is \$610.4 million dollars. This
21 represents a \$27.7 million increase from the FY 24
22 preliminary budget, largely reflecting the increased
23 wages for parks employees, which will result from the
24 city's recent contract agreement with District
25 Council 37, negotiated through collective bargaining.

2 The budget also includes new baselined staff
3 additions for our climber-pruner apprenticeship
4 program, as well as funding to formalize more of our
5 natural trails and increase our preventative tree
6 care efforts and inspections in accordance with the
7 agency's approach to tree risk management.

8 The agency's 10-year capital plan is \$8.8
9 billion, allowing the agency to renovate, reimagine,
10 and preserve our parks, playgrounds, and public
11 spaces. The executive budget includes new mayoral
12 capital allocations for pools and recreation
13 facilities, such as the outdoor pool at Hamilton Fish
14 Park in Manhattan, where we're going to invest \$51
15 million to completely reconstruct the mechanical and
16 electrical infrastructure for the pool, so it can
17 continue serving New Yorkers for years to come.

18 In closing, I want to thank Mayor Adams for
19 granting me the incredible privilege of leading this
20 agency and the opportunity to work with each of you
21 to continue improving our parks and open spaces for
22 all New Yorkers. Many of you are already familiar
23 with our experienced and responsive borough
24 Commissioners and their district teams who work
25 alongside our Central Agency Division staff to

2 deliver for New Yorkers every day. We are always
3 available to answer questions and address concerns
4 from your offices, and are happy to hear your
5 thoughts on any topic, whether it regards a local
6 park in your district or a citywide agency policy.

7 New York City Park looks forward to continuing
8 our close partnership with the Council to create a
9 bright green future with a more equitable, inclusive,
10 and resilient park system. Thank you for the
11 opportunity to testify today. We would now be happy
12 to answer any questions you may have.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Commissioner.
14 Just to know we've also been joined by Councilmember
15 Hudson.

16 I want to talk about some of the PEGs. The FY 24
17 budget includes \$15 million in PEGs for FY 23 and
18 \$20.1 million for PEGs in FY 24. These PEGs
19 thankfully do not include any headcount reductions,
20 but instead focus on less-than-anticipated spending,
21 partially the result of vacancies.

22 One PEG that I wanted to highlight was the \$4
23 million PEG in FY 24 related to less-than-anticipated
24 spending on seasonal workers. This was a result of
25 Parks Department not being able to fill all seasonal

2 positions, particularly lifeguards. Another PEG that
3 we found troubling is the \$3 million savings in FY 24
4 in the out years as a result of less-than-anticipated
5 spending for hard-to-recruit lines, such as pruners
6 and climbers, all these folks who are crucial to the
7 upkeep and continued safety of people at our parks.

8 And according to the-- the Mayor's preliminary
9 management report, this problem seems like it could
10 get worse before it gets better, because the amount
11 of street trees that were pruned was less than 5000
12 in the first four months of FY 23, which is an almost
13 73% decrease compared to the same time period in FY
14 22. So all that is to ask: Can you go into some of
15 the reasons why the Parks Department is having such
16 difficulty filling in some of these titles, such as
17 climbers and pruners?

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Chair Brannan
19 for the question. And thank you for all of the
20 support for our parks and open spaces. The support
21 from the Council has been tremendous for our parks
22 and open spaces and very much appreciated.

23 As you said, we did have to-- we had PEGs. All
24 city agencies had reductions, and the city reduced
25 vacant positions across agencies in response to what

2 are still significant economic and fiscal risks,
3 including the rapidly expanding asylum-seeker
4 population. So significant challenges and all
5 agencies needed to be able to pitch in and help
6 address those challenges.

7 It is important to note, as you said, that only
8 vacant positions have been reduced, not staffed
9 positions. And though so, you know, reducing
10 vacancies does not directly empower parks mission to
11 provide services and keep our parks clean. You're
12 right that we did make reductions in areas that are
13 hard to recruit. In particular-- So lifeguards: We
14 have seen a significant challenge that is not unique
15 to New York at all. It's a national challenge in
16 terms of recruiting lifeguards, so we had vacancies
17 there that we are still not able to fill.

18 And in addition, you mentioned the climbers and
19 pruners. That has historically been a very difficult
20 title for us to recruit for. But it's one that we
21 are very focused on. And in fact, we were thrilled
22 that we received funding for our climber-pruner
23 apprenticeship program this year. And that's a very
24 targeted effort on behalf of the Parks Department to
25 bring more people into those ranks. It's a great

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2 full time job, but it's one that many New Yorkers
3 don't think about, a job outside and caring for
4 trees. We feel like it's an incredible opportunity
5 to bring people into the agency. You can build a
6 great career as a climber-pruner. And so that's why
7 we're thrilled with this new funding. And we are
8 starting an internal in house training program to
9 help to bring in more climbers and pruners and also
10 look to diversify that workforce. It's a-- It's a
11 great career and the parks department and so we were
12 pleased to get the funding to be able to do that.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Could you tell us how many
14 climbers in pruners are budgeted? And what's the
15 actual headcount as of May 2023?

16 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: In particular, that exact
17 headcount for climbers and pruners I don't have in my
18 notes, but we absolutely can get back to you on that.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's the average time
20 between filling a position and when someone accepts
21 the position?

22 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: It's generally about
23 three to four months. We work closely with OMB on
24 all of our open positions, the time to advertise, to

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2 interview, recruit, train, you know, bring them on
3 board, it's generally around three to four months.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are there any jobs that
5 have a significantly higher or lower wait time?

6 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Wait time in terms of...?

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: From accepting until your
8 first day on the job?

9 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: No. That's generally
10 what the-- what the timeframe is.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The most recent PEG letter
12 required parks to have a 4% PEG target. Was that
13 target met?

14 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes, through vacancies.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. And there was no
16 impact on services?

17 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: We don't anticipate there
18 will be impact on services.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The tree stump removal was
20 not included in the FY 24 executive budget and it
21 still hasn't been baselined. Does the administration
22 not realize how popular this program is?

23 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember
24 for the question, and again in the interest in
25 support for our trees. Just one item to note: That

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2 there is \$2 million in baseline funding for tree
3 stump removal at the parks department and then the
4 additional \$2 million in one-shot FY 23 Council
5 funding was an extraordinary help and a tremendous
6 value for New Yorkers. But so just to clarify there
7 is \$2 million and then the additional \$2 million that
8 Council has provided has been extremely helpful.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I want to talk about
10 the PEP officers. So currently you have 300 PEP
11 officers overseeing 30,000 acres of parkland. Is
12 that true?

13 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes, that's correct.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so that means each
15 patrol on average is about 100 acres. That seems
16 like a lot of land to cover.

17 I think we all agree that there's far too many
18 PEP officers to adequately manage and patrol our
19 parks. If the adopted budget includes funding for
20 300 additional PEP officers, where would you station
21 them?

22 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, for the
23 question Councilmember, and for recognizing the
24 importance of our PEP officers. They are extremely
25 vital to our park system and for enforcing parks

2 rules and regulations. If we had additional PEP
3 officers, we would deploy them equitably across the
4 city. What we do is we look at-- With these types of
5 assignments, we look at where there are rule
6 enforcement issues and challenges and our PEP
7 officers there-- It's mobile patrol. So we will-- We
8 move them based on where we're seeing the greatest
9 issues in terms of rule enforcement needs.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is that the lowest amount
11 of PEP officers we've ever had.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Actually, it's
13 historically, quite high.

14 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah. No, it's not the
15 lowest number we've ever had

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We recently spoke with some
17 folks who live in neighborhoods where there are
18 beaches, and typically in districts like mine, where
19 there are no beaches in the summertime, we're told
20 "Well, there's no PEP officers because we had to send
21 them to the beaches," but then the people who live in
22 the beach neighborhoods say there's no PEP officers
23 there either. So... I don't know. You know, with
24 only 300 PEP officers, I imagine it's-- a lot of
25 people aren't seeing them.

2 Are there any boroughs that are-- that are
3 lacking or particularly underserved?

4 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: No. As I said, we do try
5 and apportion them equally across the boroughs. We
6 do have the summer step-up program. We do bring in
7 seasonal staff to help to meet the demand and to
8 cover different areas. But we really look to make
9 sure that they're equitably distributed across
10 boroughs.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's the vacancy rate for
12 PEP Officers?

13 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: I don't-- About 8%.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I have one last
15 question. I try to-- I try to keep my questions
16 macro, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Calvert
17 Vaux Park. In 2007, Mayor Bloomberg promised \$40
18 million. Most of that never arrived. And today in
19 order to complete that \$40 million of work in 2007,
20 it would cost about \$120 million. I think that's,
21 you know, the cost of not only inflation, but the
22 cost of broken promises. Calvert Vaux Park is
23 basically southern Brooklyn's Prospect Park. The
24 work that needs to be done there is much more than
25 any single Councilmember can provide. And I think it

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2 would be a nice win for this Administration to finish
3 something that Bloomberg started and didn't finish,
4 and de Blasio's Administration couldn't get it done
5 either.

6 So I'd love to see some commitment put to Calvert
7 Vaux Park.

8 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember.
9 And I know we've talked about Calvert Vaux in the
10 past. Absolutely. I understand the importance of
11 that open space to Brooklyn, and we will definitely
12 take note of it. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. And I obviously have
14 to shout out Commissioner Mar, who was fantastic, and
15 there are certain weeks I think I speak to him more
16 than I speak to my own family. So...

17 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: His work is appreciated.
19 And I appreciate all the work that the parks workers
20 do, you know, when they're-- especially when they're
21 being asked to do more with less. So, all right.
22 I'm going to turn it over to Chair Krishnan for his
23 questions. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Chair
25 Brannan. And I think that's a great transition

2 point. I think Chair Brannan really mentioned a
3 great point: How the parks workers are being tasked
4 with doing more with less. And so on that point, you
5 know, I've got a series of questions. I'm going to
6 ask a few now, then turn it over to our colleagues to
7 ask some, and we'll come back to a few more.

8 But the first topic is on that point exactly:
9 The 1000 new city parks worker positions that we have
10 called for in our budget response. In the FY 24
11 response, we as the Council called to include the
12 addition of 1000 new city parks workers in the
13 executive budget. Permanent baselined positions that
14 could be differentiated over time, but provides a
15 permanent job track for the workers that would be
16 hired as CPWs. This was not included. And as a
17 result, we will see many parks go without the support
18 and the attention they need, because again this is
19 not moving the needle forward. This is in the bigger
20 picture really doing right by our parks and by Parks
21 workers. I did note there was addition of 112 new
22 baseline positions in the executive budget, but that
23 clearly is not enough to support the needs of the
24 parks department. I think our parks workers are
25 struggling to do their job with the resources that

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2 they have now, significantly less compared to other
3 cities as I mentioned.

4 I know we'll talk more about the DC 37 collective
5 bargaining agreement that I was satisfied to see,
6 that provides many parks workers with many well-
7 deserved raises, but we must keep fighting for
8 all city workers to receive a fair and livable wage.
9 The addition of 1000 new CPW's would go a long way to
10 ensuring the New York City Parks are being brought to
11 their full potential and can be enjoyed by New
12 Yorkers and visitors alike.

13 So what is the current budgeted and actual
14 headcount for CPWs in FY 23?

15 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Chair
16 Krishnan, for the question and for all of your
17 support for parks and open spaces. It's greatly
18 appreciated. So the actual headcount for year-round
19 CPWs is over 980. So that's the headcount. And then
20 as you know, we bring in significant seasonal staff
21 from April to September in order to help buttress
22 that staff on the ground.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And how are they
24 distributed by borough?

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2 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: They're-- They're
3 distributed based on where we see the greatest need.
4 We use multiple different indicators to determine
5 where our staff are added, including the PIP
6 cleanliness ratings, 311 reports, staff, you know,
7 anecdotal observations. So we use data and we put
8 them where they're most needed.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And are CPWs assigned to a
10 specific park? Or do they move between different
11 parks and between neighborhoods and boroughs?

12 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: It really varies. We
13 have both. We have mobile crews that do visit
14 different parks in a confined area. And then we have
15 fixed post staff. So it varies by park and by
16 district.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And if 1000, new baseline
18 CPWs were included in the adopted budget, how long
19 would it take for the Parks Department to hire all
20 the budgeted positions? And how would the department
21 distribute these new employees?

22 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: So as I as I mentioned
23 earlier, so it's generally a three to four month
24 period to hire, recruit, interview, and onboard newly
25 funded employees. And then we would use the same

2 methodology that I just described, we make decisions
3 on resource allocations based on things like--
4 looking at data like PIP cleanliness ratings, 311
5 reports, staff observations, and we would, you know,
6 we make every attempt to distribute them equitably
7 across the boroughs.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what discussions, if
9 any, have you commissioned? I do want to thank you
10 for your great advocacy and work and leadership with
11 the Parks Department too, Especially given your
12 background before as well, I think you know, how
13 important these workers are, and more resources for
14 our parks department. So what discussions if any,
15 have you had with the administration about the
16 inclusion of these positions in the executive or
17 adopted budgets? How receptive did City Hall seem to
18 it, especially as again, noted before their stated
19 commitment to 1% of our budget for parks workers?

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes. And thank you for
21 the question. It is, as you know, it's an ongoing
22 dialogue with city hall, with OMB, about budget and
23 about resources. I do want to note that this
24 administration, within this administration, we have
25 actually over 400 new positions that have been added

2 to the parks department. And we have had, you know,
3 real great success in terms of, you know, how we're
4 deploying those people, having a second shift. So
5 this administration has been very focused on
6 resources for the parks department. The
7 conversations are ongoing in terms of budget and
8 resources, and will continue until the final budget
9 is adopted. So just to take a step back on two
10 points: So 400 new positions added, but how many
11 taken away due to these PEGs? And what's the net?

12 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Mm-hmm. Yeah, so again,
13 as I said, luckily, we didn't have to eliminate
14 staff. With the PEG we took away vacancies. So we
15 have had to make reductions in terms of vacancies.
16 But our-- our net headcount is 4600? The headcount
17 is-- I know that I have it. Yeah. It's about 4600
18 is our-- is our permanent full time headcount? And
19 just-- I know you mentioned this before, but for the
20 benefit everyone again, how many vacancies were
21 reduced because of these PEGs in total? I know that
22 it was 200-- 250.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. Okay. And just
24 to note again, as well, you know, when we finished
25 last year's budget adoption, it was \$624.2 million.

2 Now we're looking at-- and then it went up for FY 23
3 to \$647.3 million for parks budget. So \$647.3 for
4 last year, down to now an executive \$610.4 million.
5 A significant difference, a significant drop, despite
6 the fact that we've called for new-- 1000 new city
7 parks workers.

8 I'd like to turn to another topic now but before
9 doing so, I just wanted to recognize as well that
10 Councilmember Menin has joined us too virtually.

11 Now go into another issue we face: The lifeguard
12 crisis in our city. It is a crisis. This Council
13 has been very committed to expanding pool access for
14 all New Yorkers in the city. But we can't do so if
15 we don't have the appropriate and adequate staffing
16 across our pools and beaches. In recent years, the
17 department has had trouble filling all vacant
18 lifeguard positions, which has resulted in limited
19 pool and beach operations. Thankfully, first and
20 second year, lifeguards recently got raises, as you
21 mentioned to over \$21 an hour, which will allow the
22 city to become more competitive and attract more
23 applicants. But even with the new pay increase, as
24 we heard at a prior hearing, and it has still been

2 difficult for the Parks Department to bring in new
3 lifeguards.

4 So how many lifeguards are currently hired and
5 ready to begin work when pools and beaches open this
6 month.

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember
8 for the question and the focus on this incredibly
9 important part of our-- of our staff. Absolutely.
10 The lifeguards are so critical to our pool and beach
11 operations. As you noted, we are in the throes of a
12 national lifeguard shortage that continues. You're
13 seeing that all over the country. We were really
14 pleased both to be able to offer the higher pay,
15 which does make us more competitive, and the fact
16 that we were last year-- even with the challenges we
17 are facing, we were able to open all of our pools and
18 beaches for the public.

19 There is no doubt that the challenges continue
20 but-- Just to clarify, so our beaches will open later
21 this month, and then our outdoor pools will open at
22 the end of June timed with when kids get out of
23 school. So right now at this point, hiring,
24 training, certification is a rolling process. It
25 carries on really throughout the summer. And we have

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2 peak summer season staffing is on board, ideally by
3 July 4 weekend.

4 So right now we have over 200 new recruits who
5 are currently in lifeguard training. We have over
6 280 returning lifeguards who have begun the
7 recertification process with you no more to come in
8 the coming weeks.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So thank you for the
10 update too. So Commissioner, how many lifeguards do
11 you need, in total to staff all our pools and
12 beaches?

13 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: To fully staff or pools
14 and beaches, it's generally about 1400 lifeguards
15 that we need.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And how many do we have
17 currently?

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: So right now, you know,
19 we don't have a final number. As I said it's an
20 ongoing basis, but we have about-- almost 500 that
21 are in process. We are absolutely hoping to have at
22 least the same number we had last year, which was--

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Which was...?

24 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Approximately 800
25 lifeguards coming on board, we're hoping. 800 to

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2 900. So currently, at about a third of the
3 lifeguards needed, give or take.

4 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Right.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And then hoping to end up
6 with about half of what we need, give or take, a
7 little more than that.

8 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yup. Hoping to have what
9 we had last year. Yup.

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay. And then you'd
11 mentioned, as I understand it correctly, all pools
12 and beaches will be open. But I think the key
13 question is: What are the hours? How will the hours
14 be impacted?

15 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes, thank you. And a
16 good question for sure. So, as I said, in order to
17 fully open all beaches and pools, you know, we need
18 about 1400. We don't get-- you know, if we get to a
19 number around 800 or 900, we would open for one shift
20 of our pools and beaches. So, like 11 to 7 is what
21 we're anticipating.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And just to clarify again,
23 in layman's terms. So when you say fully open, what
24 are the hours you are fully open, and it sounds like

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2 11 to 7 is the shift currently with the staff
3 projected. But what would fully open look like?

4 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Fully open would mean--
5 if we had more lifeguards would be able to offer
6 early morning, late or evening shifts. We would be
7 able to offer more than one shift. With a
8 constrained pool of lifeguards, we're only able to
9 offer one shift.

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. And so with
11 multiple shifts, it would be, what?, 9 am to 9 pm
12 give or take?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Sometimes as early as
14 8.

15 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah. Yeah, we would
16 open an earlier shift, eight or nine in the morning,
17 and be able to go until seven.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. Okay. And is
19 there any difference in pay between beach and pool
20 lifeguards?

21 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: There is not no.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And I think you've kind of
23 already answered the questions about the vacancy rate
24 for lifeguards this summer. But what other efforts
25 is the Parks Department contemplating-- because

2 clearly this is a problem last year, it's going to be
3 same problem this year, one shift only available. So
4 what additional measures is the Parks Department
5 contemplating to expand both recruiting, retention,
6 and hiring of lifeguards?

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for the
8 question. And we've talked a lot about-- I mean, you
9 know, the big thing is salary. We did that this
10 year in order to make it more competitive and more
11 attractive. We did a whole lot in terms of
12 recruitment, starting really in September of last
13 year, going all the way up until now, working with
14 DoD looking to expand access to where there are
15 training facilities and pools available.

16 And also, you know, one of the things that we
17 announced recently was, even with a constrained
18 lifeguard corps, we are going to offer Learn to Swim
19 programming at our pools this summer at a pool in
20 each borough. And that's very much targeted towards
21 recognizing the importance of learning to swim,
22 recognizing the importance of teaching kids to swim,
23 and frankly, training our next, you know, the next
24 generation of lifeguards. So that is all you know,
25 about looking to build that core.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And I did think it was
3 great news to see the Parks Department restoring,
4 learn to swim at pools across our city. I think it
5 is, as you mentioned, very important and is the way
6 to make sure that our children at a young age can
7 learn to swim. So I'm heartened by that. At the
8 same time, on the other side, are our seniors who
9 also depend as you know, well, and we were there for
10 our Flushing Meadows pool aquatic center opening too,
11 how many of our seniors depend on being able to use
12 our pools as well.

13 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So we've got learn to swim
15 but our senior-- I think it's our lap swim or-- if
16 that's the right name for it. Is that going to be in
17 effect this year? We didn't have it last year, is
18 that going to be restored this year? Because our
19 seniors also depend very much so on being able to
20 have access to their pools to.

21 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes. Thank you for the
22 question. And we are so well aware of that. And we--
23 - Absolutely. It's so important to us and making it
24 available like we saw at Flushing Meadows pool and
25 availability for our seniors. We don't yet know at

2 this time what the impacts will be, until we know you
3 know how many lifeguards we have, until our outdoor
4 pool is open. We don't yet know those kinds of
5 impacts. What would it take to keep senior swim
6 open? How many lifeguards would you need? Is it
7 being considered to restore the-- the program for
8 this year?

9 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Again, it depends on how
10 many lifeguards we end up with and how many are
11 available for our pools. Generally things like that
12 require expanded hours.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay, well, I would really
14 urge the Parks Department to look at that. And I
15 think you'll hear from my colleagues too, the
16 importance of this program as well, and the
17 importance of making sure our seniors have access to
18 it. We didn't have it last year. But it is as vital
19 for our seniors as it is for our children too. So in
20 any way that Parks Department could look to make sure
21 that their staffing in place to do so I think we'd be
22 a critical step forward. We've done it on Learn to
23 Swim. It would be great to see it and important to
24 see it for-- for our senior lap swim too.

2 I'm going to turn it over to my colleagues in a
3 second. I just have one more question and topic I
4 want to cover. We've heard a lot about street trees
5 and the things that were in-- that were not in the
6 executive budget that should be when it comes to tree
7 stump removal and caring for our trees. We know that
8 our tree canopy is incredibly important for not only
9 our parks, but for our climate and climate
10 emergencies that we face. And there's a lot that we
11 need to think about there and address when it comes
12 to making sure we can plant more trees across our
13 city, critically maintain them so we get to a 30%
14 tree canopy covered by 2035, and that it's more cost
15 effective to do so as well.

16 I do need to raise the point because I think it
17 is a deep concern of mine and many colleagues too, is
18 the continued use of the Parks Departments-- or the
19 continued reliance on the Parks Department on
20 Dragonetti as a contractor for tree removal. When
21 they were going through their felony court
22 proceedings, it created an immense backlog in delays
23 when it came to addressing and maintaining and
24 planting trees across our city. As we've made very
25 clear as a City Council, this is not a contractor

2 that the parks department should be working with,
3 given all of the issues that have come up with them
4 in the past. On top of that, the delays when they
5 were in court on the criminal charges they faced, and
6 I would like to raise now again, as we've talked
7 about, most recently, in my district, there was a
8 beautiful huge London plane tree in Jackson Heights
9 with an assessed value of \$246,000 that the same
10 contractor Dragonetti wrongfully and mistakenly cut
11 down, confusing it with another tree.

12 And so we can talk about expanding the tree
13 canopy funding for maintenance and caring for our
14 street trees, but we've got a contractor here that's
15 deeply problematic that has now cut down a tree in my
16 district, and no amount of restitution, replacement
17 of other trees, is going to address the fact that we
18 lost a vital tree as part of our tree canopy. So--
19 And there are others that have their own concerns too
20 about trees and the usage of this contractor.

21 So I just would like to know: What steps is the
22 Parks Dep-- Why does the Parks Department continue to
23 use and insist on using this contractor? And what
24 steps will the Parks Department take to address it?
25 Because if the prior issues weren't enough to justify

2 a new contractor, the fact that this one is cutting
3 down trees that are part of our tree canopy is a huge
4 problem that adds more urgency to not working with
5 this contractor, or at the very least expanding the
6 pool of contractors used. And I'd love to hear a bit
7 more of how Parks is thinking about this issue.

8 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you so much for the
9 question, Chair Krishnan, and for your support and
10 awareness of the importance of our trees. That is
11 something that we share. The agency is incredibly
12 dedicated to our urban tree canopy and has an
13 incredible history and expertise in our staff, in
14 terms of caring for trees and maintaining trees. We
15 are constantly monitoring our contractors, working
16 with appropriate city agencies and DOI to monitor our
17 contractors. With us at parks, it's a balance. We
18 want to-- In order to keep the urban canopy as-- as
19 safe as possible, we believe it's in the best
20 interest of New Yorkers to complete these contracts
21 so as not to further disrupt citywide tree pruning
22 and planting.

23 So, you know, we're-- we're closely monitoring
24 the folks on the ground. We're working closely to
25 make sure and, you know, a tree coming down

2 accidentally is obviously something that's
3 devastating for us at the agency. You know, I
4 cannot-- I can't comment on pending legal actions,
5 but I can assure you that we're taking this incident
6 very seriously, and will take appropriate actions to
7 hold the responsible party accountable.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Well, I would just add,
9 again, that I do not think that Dragonetti is a
10 suitable tree contractor for the Parks Department to
11 be using, given the heightened-- the problems that
12 we're seeing. Even one tree wrongfully cut down as
13 part of our tree canopy is one tree too many, given
14 the climate emergencies we face. And I really would
15 urge the Parks Department to look at alternative
16 contractors because there are, I'm sure, plenty of
17 other qualified ones, that wouldn't bring the same
18 prior criminal issues as well. But on top of that,
19 these wrongful grossly negligent issues too.

20 And on that note, I also want to recognize that
21 Councilmember Narcisse has joined us as well. And
22 before turning it over to our colleagues, I just want
23 to say I'll come back with more questions on some
24 other issues, but I just wanted to say at this point
25 too, thank you to our Finance and Parks Committee

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2 staff, like Michael Sherman, Jack Storey, Chima
3 Obeshare, Chris Sartori, Patrick Mulvihill, and my
4 staff, Budget Director and Legislative Director Greg
5 Clark, and Chief of Staff Chuck Park, for all their
6 excellent work for today's hearing. As I said, I'll
7 be back with a few more questions but we'll turn it
8 over-- back the chair Brannan, to turn it over to our
9 colleagues.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair Krishnan.
11 We've also been joined by Councilmember Sanchez and
12 Powers. We're now going to start with questions from
13 Ayala followed by Brooks-Powers.

14 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And
15 good afternoon. I'm up here. Little ol' me. I'm
16 trying to be as big as I can. But I have I have a
17 few questions. So I know that Chair Krishnan brought
18 up the Senior Swim Program. You know, it's my
19 favorite. This was a program that Gale Brewer and I,
20 you know, saw from the inception. Under the
21 Bloomberg administration, there was a commitment as a
22 citywide initiative, right?, on how city agencies
23 serve our older adults. And there was a commitment
24 to open at least one pool. And it was so-- such a
25 success that it was replicated in 16 other pools.

2 And I get it that we're now in a bind. But we
3 haven't seen this program since prior to the
4 pandemic. And it's-- it's only an additional two
5 hours before the pool opens three times a week. That
6 could be-- You know, it could be two times a week or
7 one time a week. But I don't see why we couldn't
8 have that program, especially if the pool that we're
9 designating is already going to be open anyway. So--
10 So I just want to put that plug in.

11 One of the things that I get a lot of complaints
12 about and I'm interested to see what the budget for
13 this program is, or even if the budget exists is for
14 tree pruning in non-park areas.

15 So when we plant trees on sidewalks, I often get
16 complaints from residential-- you know homeowners or
17 from people that own vehicles that are parked on the
18 car on the street, who's brought you know, whose cars
19 are getting scratched up with the branches. Who
20 maintains the-- Whose responsibility is it to
21 maintain the tree pruning and the maintenance of the
22 of those trees, and any educational-- you know, any
23 education to the community or to the homeowners about
24 what their responsibilities are?

2 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember
3 Ayala for the question. Also for the interest, I
4 know, in Senior Swim. It's one that we share
5 absolutely, and we know how important it is.

6 As we said this year, we also had Learn To Swim
7 for kids and families for the last three years. So
8 we've worked really hard this year to at least be
9 able to have that in a pool in every borough. We
10 would love to be able to get to a point also to have
11 senior swim as well. It is just absolutely a numbers
12 issue. We need to have enough lifeguards to be able
13 to have that earlier swim time and have the pools
14 available.

15 In terms of tree pruning and care and maintenance
16 of our trees, that is squarely with the parks
17 department, and we have-- we do that by contract. We
18 do-- and thank you for noting, you know, and engaging
19 citizens. We do have a citi-- there is a citizen
20 pruner corps that we have out there that's helping.
21 We have an incredible volunteer program and super-
22 stewards who are out helping us with our trees. We
23 would love to, and we actually are having an
24 announcement coming up about engaging more New
25 Yorkers in coming out and helping us and volunteering

2 and taking care of our street trees and helping us in
3 parks. So we would love to further engage on that.
4 But it's something-- education about-- about our
5 trees, educating New Yorkers is something we are
6 very, very interested in, and would love to talk
7 further about.

8 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: Yeah. I think that that's-
9 - that's super important. And two other points: One
10 is on the-- you know, I would love to know a little
11 bit more about if there even is a budget for pool
12 expansion. The South Bronx, you know, which I cover
13 all of Mott Haven. We have one pool, and it's an
14 indoor pool in St. Mary's Park, which is under
15 renovation, and we weren't able to use it last year.
16 I don't think they are going to be able to use it
17 this year, but it's still an indoor pool. You know,
18 has there been any consideration to adding an outdoor
19 pool somewhere in the vicinity of-- of Mott Haven and
20 communities that look like mine?

21 And then secondly, regarding PEP officers, I
22 would like to know how many are-- how many are
23 assigned per district. I know that we have a syringe
24 litter issue in a lot of my playgrounds. And I am
25 curious to know whether or not those-- those

2 playgrounds and park spaces that are seeing an
3 increase in syringe litter are getting additional
4 resources.

5 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Okay. Thank you,
6 Councilmember for your question. This-- We have made
7 an incredible investment in pools across the city.
8 Absolutely. Some brand new rec centers, one coming
9 in-- in Brooklyn, one in Southeast Queens, Roy
10 Wilkins. We are always looking at where we can both
11 add to and improve our existing pools. And the Bronx
12 is certainly important as well. And we will take
13 into consideration looking at Mott Haven and those
14 areas. Absolutely.

15 And then in terms of your second question
16 regarding PEP officers: As I said earlier, we do
17 move-- they're mobile. We do move PEP officers
18 around based on conditions we're seeing in parks. We
19 look at PIP ratings. We do look at number of
20 syringes, collected those kinds of things and move
21 PEP officers to help us deal with those kinds of
22 situations on the ground. Absolutely.

23 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: I really want to give a
24 shout out to the staff that's out there, you know,
25 every single day picking up those-- the syringe

2 litter and really trying to interact in a positive
3 way with folks that may be you know, in a bad way,
4 sitting in public spaces. But it is-- it is of
5 concern and it is a public health crisis. We have
6 children playing in these spaces and you know,
7 whatever support we can lend, please feel free to use
8 us, and I hope that you're getting the support that
9 you need in that area from your partners in
10 government as well.

11 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Yeah, thank you.

12 COUNCILMEMBER AYALA: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Councilmember Brooks-
14 Powers followed by Brewer.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And Hi,
16 Commissioner. Some of the questions I wanted to
17 touch on were lightly already captured by Chair
18 Krishnan. But a few weeks ago Parks came before the
19 council for a conversation about pools. And in our
20 budget response to the preliminary plan proposed by
21 the Administration, we called for increased
22 investments in pools and swim education citywide.
23 This is an issue in which the Council is deeply
24 invested and want to see equity and pool
25 infrastructure and access. I just wanted to know

2 like what investments does this budget make in pool
3 infrastructure, and also in terms of swimming
4 programming, and what is the strategic plan in terms
5 of like 5-to-10-year outlook on how the city will
6 approach improvements to, and investments in pools
7 going forward-- pools going forward? And then
8 lastly, how does this budget help address the
9 shortage of lifeguards citywide? And what is the
10 Parks Department specifically doing to work to ensure
11 equity of distribution of lifeguards citywide?

12 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember,
13 for your question. As I said in my testimony, we
14 have an \$8.8 billion budget in the Parks Department,
15 and we do very much-- are very focused on adding
16 pools. We so appreciate the Council's advocacy for
17 our pools and recognizing the importance of pools.
18 And thanks to that, we are adding pools in burrows
19 across the city. We're at Roy Wilkins in Southeast
20 Queens, and adding a pool in Brooklyn and also making
21 significant upgrades to pools. We-- This budget
22 accounts for \$51 million for renovations to the pool
23 at Red Hook. So we are very much focused on
24 expanding access and doing all we can to invest in
25 pools, absolutely.

2 And that's why we also recently announced-- To
3 your question about the importance of swimming and
4 swim classes: As I said earlier, you know, it's
5 been-- We recognize it's been three years since we've
6 been able to offer Learn To Swim in our pools. So
7 that's why this year, we announced that we're going
8 to be bringing Learn To Swim back in pools in each
9 borough, one pool in each borough, generally Olympic-
10 sized pools, but Queens will have two pools with
11 learn to swim. And that's because we understand the
12 grave importance of this programming, absolutely.
13 And so we're trying to balance. We have-- We are
14 definitely still in a lifeguard shortage. We have--
15 We don't have the numbers we need. But we're trying
16 to balance access for the public to free swimming
17 with the importance of Learn To Swim. And so we're
18 going to run both concurrently. We're going to open
19 up our pools, we're going to look to have opportunity
20 in the pool for Learn To Swim programming alongside
21 public swimming, absolutely. So recognizing how
22 important that is, and doing all that we can even
23 under the constraints of a national lifeguard
24 shortage to bring that Learn To Swim back.

2 And then in terms of your question, in terms of
3 our strategic plan around pools and creating more
4 pools, what we're looking to do is making sure that
5 we are bringing pools to communities equitably. And
6 so where we currently have investments, we've added--
7 you know, we're thrilled about the new rec center in
8 Brooklyn and in Queens. And we're going to look to
9 continue that work as equitably as possible. It's a
10 huge investment, \$130 or \$140 million for these new
11 rec centers. But we're going to continue to push to
12 add facilities where we can, and where it makes the
13 most sense in terms of where the greatest need is.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And
15 then the lifeguards question.

16 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: And so in terms of what
17 we're doing to bring in more lifeguards. So one of
18 the big things that we did was we reached an
19 agreement to for increased pay for lifeguards to make
20 it so their job is more competitive with other
21 opportunities that are out there. So we increased
22 the pay. So it's almost \$22 an hour now. It's a \$21
23 wage, and then \$1,000 bonus if we bring on lifeguards
24 and they stay through mid-August. And so that was a
25 big push for us. We knew that we needed to increase

2 the wage in order to bring people-- bring more people
3 in and make it more competitive. And so that's been
4 a big effort in order to get that done. And so that
5 will impact not only life new lifeguards, but
6 existing lifeguards will receive that higher wage.
7 And then we worked hard on recruitment, starting in
8 September of last year, going into schools, working
9 with PSA-- the Police Athletic League, working with
10 DOE, going to competitive swim teams, doing all we
11 could to raise awareness and try and build that team
12 of lifeguards, and just providing as many
13 opportunities for people. We offered training
14 classes for-- we made some of our pools available for
15 training, so that young people would have more of an
16 opportunity to be able to pass a lifeguard test. So
17 a number of different avenues pursued with the idea
18 of trying to increase that core of who's coming out.

19 And then lastly, as I said, we firmly believe
20 that the Learn to Swim program is about building that
21 core of lifeguards too. Like exposing more young
22 people to swimming, having them be comfortable in the
23 water, and targeting them for, you know, a great
24 summer job.

25 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Brewer
3 followed by Ossé.

4 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Um, I want to
5 thank the Manhattan office. They're always
6 wonderful. And also, thank you for Soldiers And
7 Sailors funding. We look forward to seeing you on
8 Memorial Day. And the trees: I want to know how
9 long does it take to plant a tree from funding to
10 it's in the ground? Obviously, in some cases, we
11 have the funding. We put it in in participatory
12 budgeting, but no tree.

13 And also, how many street trees do you plant
14 every year? And what's the cost? And what would it
15 take to do all of the vacant tree lots-- tree--
16 street trees. Because it seems to me there's an
17 awful lot of vacant tree spaces without or without
18 stumps.

19 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember
20 for the question, and for your support of our urban
21 tree canopy. It's so important to parks, and we
22 appreciate that it's important to you as well. There
23 is no doubt that there are a lot of spaces to fill,
24 and we're working really hard on getting those spaces
25 filled. There are certainly more requests than we

2 can accommodate at this point. But it's great that
3 New Yorkers want trees, and that's what we want as
4 well. We are trying to balance the requests for
5 trees from the public with planting in areas that
6 most need them. So in areas that experience high
7 heat vulnerability, we plant based on a heat
8 vulnerability index is one of the ways that we
9 determine where trees go. And so it's looking to
10 balance that-- where the greatest need is, and
11 requests--

12 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: But where we have the
13 money, I don't see my trees.

14 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: So through participatory
15 budgeting, we have allocated money. That's what you
16 mean? Yes.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Two years and no trees.

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes, it can take a while.
19 Jennifer, do you want to speak specifically to...?

20 COUNSEL: Hi. Do you affirm that your testimony
21 will be truthful to the best of your knowledge,
22 information and belief? And you will honestly and
23 faithfully answer a councilmember questions?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: I do.

25 COUNSEL: Thank you.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: We'll follow up
3 on your specific allocation, Councilmember. So thank
4 you for checking in with us. I appreciate it. And
5 we did have delays in planting, which I'm sure you
6 know. We really wanted to be responsible with the
7 city's money, and there was a point at which, as you
8 know, the costs were high.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: But what is-- what is the
10 timeframe, if there is money, to planting?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: It can-- It's
12 like any other capital funding, so it does take a
13 year or so for procurement, depending on where we are
14 in the cycle.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: But why does it takes so
16 long to plant a tree? I understand a building. I
17 understand a park. I understand design. I've been
18 doing this for about 30 years. But I don't
19 understand a tree.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Sure. I
21 understand. The design itself is actually-- doesn't
22 take very long. It's the procurement piece, like any
23 other capital funding has to move into a capital
24 contract, which we go through in terms of bidding out
25 and procurement.

2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I think that's something to
3 work on, as we would say.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Thank you.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Number two is-- I don't
6 know or care so much about the stumps. I know other
7 boroughs do. But I do want to know for the pruning,
8 and/or the stumps, and/or the planting, how much is
9 outside contractors costing? Because I see Bartlett
10 all over the place. I assume you're paying them.
11 And I don't know this company that my colleague
12 mentioned, but that seems to me like it's quite
13 problematic.

14 So my question is, how in the world did they have
15 people doing the job, the Parks Department doesn't,
16 and how much are you paying them that you could be
17 paying the best Parks workers?

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for the
19 question, and we appreciate your focus on Parks
20 workers. As I said, we were thrilled and largely
21 because of the expertise and influence of the
22 Environment and Planning Team. We do want to focus
23 on building that core of workers. There's no doubt.
24 And so that's why we have initiated the climber-
25 pruner training program. And we do absolutely want

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2 to bring more people into those ranks. And Jennifer
3 and her team has also worked really hard on just
4 expanding the ranks.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: How much did we pay
6 Bartlett and these other folks to do the jobs? In
7 other words-- either on planting-- either on
8 contracting out for planting, pruning, or stump
9 removal? What was the outside budget for those?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Thank you for the
11 question. First of all, I just want to say, I don't
12 even know if Bartlett is one of our contractors. So
13 there are other contractors. So there are other--

14 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I don't know. Whoever--
15 Whoever they are. Maybe there's somebody privately
16 paying them. I don't know.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Sure I can tell
18 you what the average cost city wide is for some of
19 these, or are you asking about the total budget for
20 the year?

21 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: No, I'll the-- I'll take
22 whatever you're going to give me.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: So an average
24 cost to remove a tree is around \$2,000. To remove a
25 stump is less than \$500. Again, this is average.

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2 There are many differences in terms of size. And the
3 burros are different because they're different
4 contracts. So those are two examples. And pruning a
5 tree is sometimes around \$100 a tree.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay, now, are you doing
7 all of that? Or are you doing outside contractors?
8 What's the cost of outside contractors total for
9 either-- each one of these, or totally?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Those examples of
11 average costs are for our contractors. They're not
12 for our in house crews.

13 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. But how much are
14 you paying the contractors? It's I'm trying to get a
15 number for the contractors, the outside contractors.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: So-- Okay. So
17 we'll-- we'll get back to you. You want to know what
18 our budget is for the year, total, not individuals.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I do. Because that to me
20 that money should go towards individuals who work for
21 the Parks Department.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Got it. So for
23 example, in FY 23, we had \$8.7 million for our block
24 pruning program. That's-- That's one piece of it,
25 but there are many other pieces of contracts. But we

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2 strategically use contractors to supplement our in-
3 house crews. They really provide--

4 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Well, I understand that,
5 but it would be nice if you had the in-house, and you
6 wouldn't have to pay them, and you're paying them
7 more than you would pay the individual who's doing
8 it.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Thank you.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Just one other quick
11 question, if I might. So the issue is-- Maybe you
12 mentioned this, but there are individuals who are
13 fabulous, who work in playgrounds during the summer.
14 You never have enough. So I want to know how many of
15 those are hired? Is that part of your seasonal? I
16 assume it is. But it's slightly different than the
17 horticulture. And-- And particularly do you cover
18 how many X percentage, how many more would you need?
19 And I'm concerned about NYCHA. A lot of your
20 playgrounds are in NYCHA developments, not all but
21 some, and they desperately need these park workers.
22 So, Park-- I don't know what you call them. They're
23 just--

24 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Playground associates.

25 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I think they're fantastic.

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2 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Yes, absolutely. Yeah.

3 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: So how many more do you
4 need? How many do you have? What's the budget?

5 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you for the
6 question. And for recognizing how important they
7 are.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Everything's important in
9 Parks. That's the problem, we don't have enough
10 money, and we need the 1%.

11 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you. I appreciate
12 all of the support. They are called playground
13 associates. I don't think we have an exact number
14 for you right now, but we absolutely can get that for
15 you.

16 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: The number who are on
17 staff? I guess last summer, you don't have?

18 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: No.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Or the-- Or their
20 budgeting, and what would be the appropriate budget
21 if you had the full amount, similar to what the chair
22 asked for other titles?

23 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: We can absolutely get you
24 that number.

25

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: All right. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chair Krishnan.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Councilmember

5 Brewer. Just one question. I'm sorry, Deputy

6 Commissioner. Just to give you-- How many tree

7 contractors does the Parks Department use?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Thank you for the

9 question. I don't know the exact answer. I would

10 say probably at least a dozen, I mean, across all the

11 kinds of contracting we have.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay. And what share of

13 that work does the Dragonetti firm have, would you

14 say?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: I can't answer at

16 the moment. But I can get that to you. It's fluid.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay, I would venture to

18 say they probably have a lot, given all the reporting

19 and all that we've seen about them, and parks

20 continued use on them-- use of them. But clearly if

21 they are other contractors, there are others who are

22 qualified to do this work too. So-- But thank you

23 for the for the answer.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Thanks.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. We have
3 Councilmember Ossé followed by Barron.

4 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Good morning, Commissioner.
5 And I just want to say on Dragonetti, that-- that
6 name alone should have been the first red flag in
7 terms of contracting with the city.

8 In terms of my questions, my constituents have
9 concerns about visibility and lighting and many of
10 our parks, most especially in Hattie Carthan Park, in
11 Bed Stuy. Many of my constituents feel that they
12 would be safer with more lighting within that
13 particular park, and we've raised this with, you
14 know, the Borough Commissioner, and I wanted to put
15 it on your radar.

16 Does the Parks Department have a lighting
17 improvement plan or study? And if so, is there
18 budget within parks capital plan to work on lighting
19 projects?

20 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember
21 for the question. I appreciate it. And we do very
22 closely look at lighting and needs for lighting
23 across our parks. Sometimes it can be a balance,
24 because they're-- depending on how residential it is
25 around the parks, some people don't want too much

2 lighting in the park because they feel it can be
3 intrusive. But we work very closely. It's parks and
4 also often DOT on lightning, depending on where it is
5 within the park. But it's something that we can
6 absolutely, you know, take a look at and follow up
7 on.

8 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: I appreciate that. And
9 also, as you testified in your opening statement, and
10 as some of my colleagues have asked about, that
11 swimming as a critical life for New Yorkers. As we
12 all know many adults in the city still don't know how
13 to swim. It is phenomenal that the parks department
14 has an affordable adult swimming program and classes
15 that are provided, including one in my district at
16 St. John's park, or St John's Recreation Center. But
17 the waiting list for those classes are more than 90
18 people long. I wanted to ask you what are your plans
19 to expand these classes so that more adults are able
20 to learn how to swim?

21 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you for the
22 question. And we also absolutely recognize the
23 importance of learning to swim. That's why we've
24 worked so hard to make them free and available in our
25 rec centers across the city. Our challenge with you

2 know, availability is related directly to lifeguards
3 and every-- every public pool whether it's indoor or
4 outdoor, you need a requisite number of lifeguards in
5 order to be able to provide the programming within
6 them.

7 So we recognize that there is a real demand.
8 That's why we worked really hard this year, even with
9 constrained lifeguard staffing to offer Learn To swim
10 in a pool in each borough. And so, you know, in
11 terms of being able to offer more and more
12 availability, it's really about pushing that and
13 expanding our core of lifeguards.

14 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Barron
16 followed by Marte.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Yeah, if you could hold up
18 the time for a minute, I just want to offer some
19 public criticism since I'm cut off more than any
20 other councilmember to Chair Brannan, I don't
21 understand how some of us get here before you and the
22 leadership, and we put our name on the list. And
23 then the leadership goes before us. But they come
24 late. And then you interject more questions when we
25 got other things on our agenda. So I just wanted to

2 publicly say that since I'm publicly cut off more
3 than any other Councilmember.

4 And to the Commissioner, I don't understand why
5 this contract continues. I'm serious. You know, you
6 said you'll monitor it. You know, they was guilty.
7 They pled guilty and paid \$1.2 billion in fraud. And
8 that contract should be terminated. I mean, that's
9 not a friendly, good corporate friend that the city
10 should be dealing with. I guess crime does pay when
11 you can commit a crime like that, insurance fraud,
12 and then still maintain a contract and cut down a
13 valuable tree and say it was a mistake, we'll monitor
14 it. Unconscionable and unacceptable. Something
15 immediately should happen to this cooperation. They
16 should be terminated whatever is in the contract that
17 allows for termination, that should happen. And I'm
18 sure there are more than competent companies that can
19 fill in the space more competently than them.

20 And then your favor. I think that the \$610
21 million is not enough. You know, you need at least
22 1% of the city-- a \$106.7 billion contract. It
23 should be at least a billion for parks. And that is
24 not asking for a lot in this contract, and your
25 capital allotment-- and I'm saying this for my

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2 colleagues, because we mentioned this to you, but we
3 vote on the budget, we should not vote on a budget
4 that only gives you \$8.8 million for 10 years of a
5 capital projects. And when the city has \$164
6 billion-- and you're getting \$8.8 billion, I think it
7 is.

8 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: \$8.8 billion.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Right. I correct myself.
10 \$8.8 billion out of \$164 billion city 10-year capital
11 plan. Eight? So you're getting less than a billion
12 a year to do all of the stuff that has to be done.
13 So I'm going to fight for you in that sense. And
14 everybody up here that's asking you about the budget,
15 we should be mindful of that, that the mayor doesn't
16 vote for the budget we do. And we should call for
17 more for our parks. Having said that, I also feel
18 that the 550 projects that our-- what is that? The
19 Parks Program, and I always have a battle with them.
20 That they-- Green Thumb. That Green Thumb, the 550
21 gardens, we have 57 in our district, and I fought
22 very, very hard to keep those parts from being
23 developed and to housing and things like that, much
24 as we needed it. But we-- we have 57 in our
25 district, and we want to know why is it they have two

2 trucks, two trucks to deliver woodchips, two trucks
3 to deliver soil to our parks-- I mean gardens.
4 Unacceptable. I don't know what you have to do. I
5 spoke to the Commissioner Maher. He's been great.
6 He's going to work with us on it. But he needs help
7 too. Because that is unacceptable. Only two trucks,
8 and we're not having things delivered.

9 And also the Breukelen -- some call it Brookline
10 -- Breukelen ball fields. That is a huge project.
11 And by the way, in most black and brown communities,
12 we have smaller parks. In black and brown committees
13 our parks are smaller. This one is a pretty nice
14 sized Park. But the capital needs go beyond
15 Commissioner Maher, and my -- and I'm willing to put
16 in some of my capital, he's putting in some of his --
17 but we-- we can make a fantastic space out of that
18 for about \$6, \$8 million, \$10 million, or no, \$30
19 million is what I think it was, but we can make a
20 fantastic field out of that in a black and brown
21 community that doesn't have the big parks like some
22 of the white communities have. So I'm hoping you can
23 look into that.

24 And then finally, I think is very, very important
25 as we deal with our gardens and parks. And I know

2 you realize the essentialness of parks. Parks are
3 good for mental health. And you know, in our
4 community, because Borough President Maher-- Borough
5 Commissioner Maher, we've done so many parks in our
6 community, and he's done a fantastic job, that even
7 during the pandemic, thank God, we had these parks,
8 because it's good for mental health, and I think that
9 it's essential that we prioritize-- us here
10 prioritize parks, when it comes to not just the
11 playground for people to play in. But we need to
12 really understand the-- the essential necessity of
13 parks. And I'll leave you with all those questions
14 and hope you remember it.

15 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember.
16 I really appreciate it. Completely agree and
17 appreciate the recognition of the Green Thumb
18 Program. It is one that is so essential. And this
19 council has really been so helpful in supporting the
20 Green Thumb Program through funding, through the
21 Parks Equity Initiative. So many resources have been
22 able to be put towards Green Thumb thanks to the
23 Council, so it's very much appreciated.

24 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Well, I need you to answer
25 the questions though, you know, about the two trucks?

2 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes.

3 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: That is unacceptable.

4 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: And we cannot just do two
6 trucks, and why we're not terminating this contract
7 with these criminals who pled guilty to fraud.

8 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: I don't know how they even
10 got a contract, and certainly don't know how they're
11 continuing a contract. And then will you support us
12 in the Breukelen fields, so that we can get a
13 mammoth, very important project done.

14 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: So in terms of the
15 Dragonetti contract, as I said, I'm not able to
16 comment. There's some legal actions that are now
17 being undertaken. But we are, as I said earlier,
18 we're just trying to balance, you know, care for the
19 urban tree canopy. And having that work done,
20 there's a huge desire for tree planting, pruning, all
21 the things that go on, and ending that contract would
22 create a huge and additional backlog. The team here
23 at Parks has done a great job in terms of the--
24 Councilmember Krishnan announced about the pool of
25 contractors. They have done a great job of expanding

2 that pool, bringing in MWBE contractors to help
3 expand the number of contractors. That's what we're
4 going to continue to push to do, so that we have
5 others that we can rely on and will continue to rely
6 on.

7 Absolutely agree in terms of the trucks for Green
8 Thumb, and I know you've spoken to Commissioner
9 Maher. We will also be looking into it. There are
10 issues in terms of vehicles that need to be salvaged
11 and keeping within a fleet count and a number of
12 different things like that. But we understand the
13 importance of this work and their work, and we'll
14 continue to advocate for addressing that, and we'll
15 certainly be following up with Commissioner Maher in
16 seeing about--

17 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: And Breukelen Park?

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: In Breukelen Park, I
19 absolutely know the park and know how important it is
20 for the community. And we will follow up and look at
21 resources and availability of capital funds for it.

22 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Williams
24 followed by Carr.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: [inaudible]. Hello.
3 Hi, Commissioner.

4 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Hello.

5 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: So I have three
6 questions, and one is about trees. So the first
7 question is: Multiple community-based organizations
8 in Queens that are loved by local residents are
9 currently, as you know, undergoing negotiations
10 regarding their lease agreements. And I just wanted
11 to know-- I know we've had a lot of offline
12 conversations, but I think it's important to have an
13 online conversation about ensuring that these
14 organizations are not harmed or overburdened by
15 certain criterias that may be in, what I know they've
16 been asked to enter into, which is a concession
17 agreement. So yes.

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember
19 for the question. And yes, we've had a lot of
20 conversations about these organizations. I'm very
21 familiar with the concession agreement. When I was
22 at-- prior to this, I was at the Prospect Park
23 Alliance. We also needed to move forward with a
24 concession agreement. When there is an organization
25 that is using public property and charging a fee for

2 services, it does-- it was determined that there
3 needs to be a concession agreement in place for that
4 activity. Our team has worked really hard with those
5 organizations to make sure that it is not burdensome,
6 and that there is the opportunity for that really
7 good programming to move forward, but there's-- that
8 we can also have the legal agreement that is needed
9 to be in place.

10 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you. I just
11 wanted to state though, for the record that three
12 organizations that I know of, and I've spoken to
13 their leadership, and three different organizations
14 have something different to say. They feel that the
15 way that Parks is negotiating the contracts is going
16 to lead to a burden for them. And these are very
17 local, locally-based organizations, meaning that they
18 don't necessarily have a lot of the funding that
19 other entities that enter into these agreements, like
20 the one you used to run, they don't have these sort
21 of big cash flows, to be able to maintain the type of
22 agreements that they're being asked to maintain. So
23 I do hope you take that into consideration. I know
24 you are personally passionate about that. But the
25 talks on the other side with these loc-- all three,

2 not even just one, all three-- are very disheartening
3 to hear how the negotiations have been carried out
4 through the parks department.

5 The other question I have is: Multiple parks in
6 my district have capital projects that are
7 significantly delayed by way of close to nine months
8 to a year. Do you have a plan to accelerate the
9 process of on lining some of these capital projects?

10 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for the
11 question. And there is no doubt that, you know,
12 coming out of COVID, there was a one-year pause on
13 projects. And so we are still coming out of that
14 environment, and things were definitely delayed. But
15 we have been working hard to make sure that we can
16 move forward as actively as possible and do that in a
17 variety of ways, whether it be bringing on
18 consultants to help with engineering to move these
19 things forward, addressing, you know, all different
20 ways to be able to move these as quickly as possible.
21 We are also part of a citywide task force on capital
22 process reform to look at some of these areas that
23 are holding up things like procurement. Deputy
24 Commissioner Greenfeld mentioned that, you know,
25 there are challenges within the process.

2 So we've been working very closely, and Deputy
3 Commissioner Braddock has been actively engaged in
4 this Capital Process Reform Task Force that is
5 specifically focused on trying to speed up what we
6 know is a-- is a complicated process. Absolutely.

7 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. My final question
8 is about trees, but from the perspective of
9 homeowners. So we have a lot of trees in my
10 district, and they are very disruptive to sidewalks,
11 they're disruptive to people's sewer systems. And
12 there has been plenty of people that have come to my
13 office in tears, and the Parks Department has been
14 not helpful to say the least. And so outside of the
15 volunteer programs, the baseline and funding in
16 budgets to have more people in the forestry unit.
17 Are there other things that you're looking at in
18 terms of the emergency work that you can do to assist
19 in trees, tree issues, for homeowners specifically?

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes. And thank you for
21 the question. And absolutely. We don't want
22 homeowners in tears because of trees, for sure. And
23 we-- we have done a whole lot in terms of looking at
24 the species of trees that we're planting to limit the
25 impacts, and looking to make sure that there aren't

2 impacts on-- on pipes and roots and things like that.
3 But we would absolutely be happy to follow up on
4 specific instances and issues and can look at, you
5 know, individual situations for sure.

6 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah. Because I do
7 think that we should look into possibly like some
8 type of like fund to support homeowners, because when
9 they go into their pipes, they have to be responsible
10 for that. They're not allowed to cut down trees, or
11 they get fines from the Parks Department. Could you
12 just share like the criteria around when a tree can
13 be removed? Because that's another place of
14 contention. Because the Parks Department has come
15 out, trees might be leaning on someone's roof,
16 obstructing their view from their window, and the
17 Parks Department refuses to even prune the tree in a
18 proper way because of a criteria that is not
19 transparent. Like I have no idea what the set
20 criteria is to determine whether or not a tree can be
21 cut down or pruned.

22 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes. And thanks for the
23 question. We are very much trying to safeguard the
24 trees as we said there was talk earlier about you
25 know how devastating it was when a large tree came

2 down. We're very much looking to preserve and
3 protect the urban canopy as much as possible because
4 we know the benefits that it adds. We know how it
5 helps keep houses and communities cooler. So we are
6 going to look at-- have a very stringent lens in
7 terms of taking down a tree, because it is something
8 that, you know, we feel very strongly as the stewards
9 of the for-- of the urban forest, we want to be
10 really careful about removing them, but--

11 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Is it-- Sorry. Is it
12 your internal policy that created the criteria?

13 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: In terms of what trees
14 come down?

15 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: To determine-- Mm-hmm.
16 Yeah. Is it internal policy?

17 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah. Absolutely. It's
18 not policy. It's-- We look at things like the health
19 of the tree. If there's pruning that's needed, we,
20 you know, we send out foresters. That's why we do
21 inspections. We have teams and foresters in each
22 borough. They're going to assess. And you know, if
23 there is pruning that's needed, absolutely, they will
24 do it. But we're looking at the overall health of
25 the tree and the tree canopy.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. I know you guys
3 do inspection, but the backlog of inspection is
4 significantly long. And so you are not actually
5 getting to the trees in a timely fashion. And then
6 when we do call about emergency trees, that then also
7 takes a long time to be executed. And we often have
8 to cut through tremendous red tape to get folks to
9 come out. So I know everyone's talking about trees,
10 but I just want to like highlight that homeowners,
11 when they have to deal with trees, and like with all
12 due respect to the trees and the urban canopy, like
13 if I own my home, and then now I have to pay
14 thousands of dollars because a tree is in a pipe,
15 like, in that case, I'm sorry. Like the trees life
16 is not as important as like the homeowners ability to
17 flush a toilet, as an example, which is real issues
18 that happen every day in my district. And I just
19 want to end by thanking the Queensboro Commission's--
20 Commissioner's Office, Jackie and Mira. They're very
21 helpful. I love them very much. And so I just
22 wanted to end by saying that and also just think your
23 Commissioner Iris was also really helpful with all of
24 the issues we have in the community. Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Great. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're also joined by
3 Councilmember Stevens. Now we'll have questions from
4 Councilmembers Carr followed by Hudson. Thank you,
5 Chairs. Commissioner, great to see you. As always,
6 I want to thank you and your team for the
7 collaboration over the last 18 months, and in
8 particular, our Borough Commissioner, Linda
9 Ricciardone, in Staten Island. She and her team are
10 just wonderful. So thank you all.

11 I want to explore a little bit along the topic my
12 colleague, Councilmember Williams, was just
13 discussing, in particular, the Tree And Sidewalk
14 Program.

15 Could you let us know what the funding level for
16 the Tree And Sidewalk Program is for the executive
17 budget? And is it at all different from the prelim
18 and the FY 23 adopted budget?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: [TO COMMISSIONER
20 DONAGHUE][inaudible]

21 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Hold on one second. We
22 will look and see what that budget is. And I don't
23 think that it has shifted at all. Do you want to
24 take that, Jennifer?

25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Thank you for
3 that question, Councilmember. While you're looking
4 for the specific numbers of what did shift, something
5 did shift is not the amount, but whether it was an
6 expense budget versus the capital budget. So you'll
7 see-- you might see that it's not-- it was, I think,
8 \$6.75 maybe, but don't quote me on that, in the
9 expense budget, and that's been lowered to \$1, but
10 it's been swapped with capital funding, which is
11 actually very favorable, because then we don't have
12 that race against time to spend the money within the
13 year. And we have that flexibility when something
14 doesn't meet capital eligibility, because it has to
15 be a certain-- meet a threshold, we still have the
16 expense money to take care of those trees and
17 sidewalks. So the funding did not go down. It just
18 shifted where it is in the budget.

19 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: I appreciate that. So what
20 rating of trees-- of sidewalk do you guys expect
21 you'll be able to do? I assume it's different based
22 on the borough? Because I think you do contracts by
23 community district, if I recall that correctly. So
24 if you could just give us a sense of what you're
25 going to be doing in terms of rating? And what

2 percentage of outstanding, I guess, entrants into the
3 program are going to be done versus not done? If
4 that's the funding that you have?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Sure. Thank you
6 for the question. First of all, we don't have a
7 different threshold in different boroughs. We're
8 still targeting 80 as the rate, so it's-- it's just,
9 there's less funding in Manhattan, for example,
10 because that just doesn't happen as much, the trees
11 aren't as large. And you probably get more, because
12 there might be more in Staten Island. So the
13 threshold is the same across the board, and we're
14 still targeting 80, and then specifically what's in a
15 backlog versus not, we can get you those numbers, and
16 for your district.

17 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Sure, because I think that--
18 I think it's safe to say that, you know, particularly
19 based on what Councilmember Williams was saying, my
20 own experiences, I think we all know a rating of 80
21 or higher is not enough to really make a substantial
22 dent. We have so many constituents who are in the
23 low-to-mid-70s range. And I think we have to do
24 more. And it's great that you're making the funding
25 more flexible. And hopefully that allows more to be

2 done over the long term. But if we're going to make
3 real strides, get the sidewalks fixed, because they
4 are tripping hazards, and not done completely at the
5 expense of the homeowner, particularly since Parks is
6 agreeing that the city is responsible by engaging in
7 the rating system, we have to do more and do it more
8 quickly. So do you think that there is an
9 opportunity for us to do a little bit more for the FY
10 24 budget, and get us closer to say 75 for the coming
11 fiscal year.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: I know that
13 we're-- The budget is an ongoing conversation and we
14 can continue that with you.

15 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Okay. So this final
16 comments and I'll hand it back to the Chairs. I just
17 want to associate myself with the calls for
18 additional PEPs funding. We definitely need more
19 PEPs officers in Staten Island. The Chair referenced
20 an officer-to-acreage ratio earlier. I'm sure it's
21 much higher for my borough because we have so much
22 acreage, and that's a great thing, but it also means
23 we have more of our city's assets to protect. And
24 the same for the tree stump removal program. That's
25 always been a recurring problem in Staten Island, and

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2 hopefully we can get that one time funding back into
3 the adopted budget. Thank you, Chairs.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Hudson
5 followed by Louis.

6 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Thank you. Hi,
7 Commissioner. How are you?

8 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Good. Thanks.

9 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Good to see you. I want
10 to just follow up on some of the questions that my
11 colleagues asked specifically around older adults--

12 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Mm-hmm.

13 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: -- and programming that
14 you have for them. Can you just confirm whether
15 there have been any cuts to parks programming,
16 servicing older adults in the FY 24 budget?

17 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah, no. Thank you,
18 Councilmember for the question. The budget isn't
19 really structured that way. So I would say there
20 haven't been cuts to say public programs or
21 recreation. You know, we did take cuts. So the PEGs
22 were focused on eliminating vacant positions, but we
23 didn't specifically cut any programming, say, for
24 older adults. No.

25 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Okay. Great. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Louios,
3 followed by Restler.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair. Good to
5 see you, Commissioner.

6 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: I have a couple of
8 questions. But I do want to associate my sentiments
9 with Councilmember Carr on the Tree Sidewalk Program,
10 which is a major issue in our district.

11 I have three questions. One is in regards to PEP
12 officers, one is in regards to recreation and the
13 climber-pruner apprenticeship program.

14 So regarding PEP officers, I wanted to know how
15 many PEP officers are assigned to Brooklyn, and
16 what's the expansion for the FY24 exec-- the exec
17 budget? And how can you and your staff ensure that
18 it's equitably distributed?

19 The second question is in regards to climber-
20 pruner apprenticeship program. I wanted to know how
21 many recipients are you expecting to onboard, and
22 where will they be deployed, since you're asking for
23 new baseline staff additions for this program?

24 And the third one is in regards to recreation,
25 which you and I have been in contact about often and

2 I feel that this agency has failed Council district
3 45. I have very low confidence in this agency about
4 Parks programming when it comes to East Flatbush,
5 Flatbush, Midwood, and Flatlands. I wanted to know
6 when it comes to rec-- the Recreation Department, how
7 many staffers are assigned to recreation? And what
8 can be done to make this unit more equitable, with
9 programs specifically to Council District 45?

10 And those are the three. Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: [INAUDIBLE ASIDE
12 CONVERSATION WITH MR. DRURY.]

13 Thank you, Councilmember for the question. So
14 first off in terms of PEP, and distribution: So we
15 have 600-- I mean 300 PEP officers overall. There
16 are 16 assigned to Brooklyn of that 300. And in
17 terms of how they are distributed, we look to do that
18 as equitably as possible across each borough. And
19 we're looking at things like-- we're looking at
20 indicators around where there are challenges in terms
21 of rule enforcement, and where we're seeing that
22 there are, you know, problem areas. They are mobile,
23 we ship them as needed. If we see a need in a
24 particular park or particular area, we're going to

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2 shift them. But overall it's 60 PEP officers for
3 Brooklyn.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: I know that we do have a
5 high rate of 311 notifications to your agency for the
6 need for PEP officers in particular parks in our
7 district, whether it be safety related, anything, and
8 we get a lack of response from your agency regarding
9 PEP officers in East Flatbush. So it would be good
10 to know of the 60 how many are assigned to Council
11 District 45. How can we get more visibility of the
12 PEP officers within this particular district? And I
13 think you know this, and Chair Krishnan knows this as
14 well, Council District 45 has the lowest amount of
15 parks in the city. So I think that it would be great
16 to get additional support. But I do have two more
17 questions chair Brannan, if they could be answered, I
18 would appreciate it, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yup.

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Sure. Absolutely. And
21 then you asked about the Climber-Pruner Program. And
22 so right now we're starting it as a pilot. It'll
23 have between 15 and 17 individuals who are part of
24 that program. It's a 15 month training program, and
25 pretty rigorous. We are making it available

2 initially to internal folks working in Parks in order
3 to build out the program. It is, as I said, very
4 rigorous. It involves climbing. But we're really
5 excited about it. We think it's a great career for
6 people and we're anxious to build out the pilot as a
7 way to build up our climber and pruner staff, which
8 is hard to recruit. It always has been. It's
9 difficult. You know, not a lot of people tend to
10 think about careers climbing trees and pruning trees.
11 So we're really anxious to be able to build that core
12 of people.

13 And then we don't know yet. It's just starting,
14 and it's 15 months. So I don't know yet where
15 they'll be assigned, but we'll look to do that, you
16 know, where the greatest need is and equitably across
17 the borough.

18 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Like my colleagues, we need
19 more pruners in the district. And then the last one
20 is regards to recreation.

21 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes. And in terms of
22 recreation. Thank you. I know, that is something
23 that we have spoken about directly. Our recreation
24 budget is \$33 million overall. And, and our
25 headcount overall is 394 people. And that doesn't

2 include seasonal staff. We do generally bring in
3 seasonal staff.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: All right. It would be
5 good to know what additional programs could be given
6 to Council District 45. As I shared earlier, our
7 confidence in his agency is very low. And I'm very
8 disturbed at the response-- lack of response, and how
9 lackluster this agency has been to Council District
10 45. So I'm looking for a change. Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you. I'm so sorry
12 to hear that. And we have spoken directly I know
13 when will continue to do so our staff is anxious to
14 follow up. It's not typical for us to not be
15 responsive. We have, you know, a really good history
16 of working closely with communities and on our
17 programming across communities. So I absolutely want
18 to address that, as I said in our recent
19 conversation, and I look forward to doing that.
20 Definitely. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Restler
22 followed by Fariás.

23 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: There we go. Firstly,
24 thank you to Chairs Krishnan and Brannan. I
25 appreciate both of your leadership and to

2 Commissioner Donahue. Great to see you and your
3 whole team, even Claudia. [chuckles] I do want to
4 echo Chair Krishnan's comments about the problematic
5 contractor Dragonetti that, you know, I know there's
6 been a DOI investigation. I know there are serious
7 issues. I just want to really underscore my support
8 for his words, and hope that we can have new, better
9 contractors in place as quickly as possible.

10 I also want to compliment Deputy Commissioner
11 Greenfeld for her leadership and partnership. We've
12 really enjoyed working with her in district 33 and
13 are excited to be planting 3400 trees over the next
14 four fiscal years in every available tree bed in our
15 district.

16 But I am concerned, and this is along the lines
17 of what I asked at the preliminary budget hearing, I
18 am concerned about the progress that we've been
19 making to date this year. And so the only hard data
20 that I believe we have are from the PMMR, which was a
21 really rough first four months of the year, where we
22 saw a major decline, almost 50% decline in tree
23 plantings year over year. And now that we're
24 approaching the end of the fiscal year, can you give
25 us an update on where you intend to land for total

2 trees planted this year? How close are we to the
3 32,468 of FY 22? And-- And what are our goals for
4 24?

5 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you so much for the
6 question, and for your focus on trees and planting
7 them in your district. We really appreciate it.

8 We recognize that the PMMR numbers were very low.
9 And that we talked about last time I was here, that
10 had to do somewhat with when the-- the date that that
11 is captured, that-- that number is recorded. I'm
12 pleased to say that we have done a good job of
13 catching up in terms of our tree planting. The
14 number [MR. DRURY SPEAKING]-- Yeah. We anticipate
15 to have 30,000 trees planted-- 13,000 trees planted
16 sorry, in the upcoming fiscal year, an additional.
17 Jennifer's going to [inaudible].

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: We anticipate
19 having the same number of street and park trees
20 planted. So we had that record 13,000 trees planted
21 in FY 22, and we anticipate the same, so we'll be
22 making that up. And the other bulk of it, if we're
23 saying 30, then that is true, that is usually in the
24 forest restoration program. So that's the other

2 piece of what makes up our annual tree planting
3 numbers that get reported in the MMR.

4 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: And do we have a goal for
5 FY 24 that you can share with us now?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: I don't have that
7 right now.

8 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: But-- But you could come
9 back to us with one?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Absolutely.

11 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: That would be great.

12 Thank you. And then if-- Well, I won't ask about
13 pruning, because I think a number of my colleagues
14 already did, although I'll second their comments.
15 The one other thing I was hoping to ask about if-- if
16 I don't get kicked by Shekar and Justin, are-- is
17 about the Parks Opportunity Program.

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Mm-hmm.

19 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: And I'm deeply concerned
20 about the \$9 million PEG in this fiscal year, the \$8
21 million PEG in next fiscal year. POP workers are
22 critical to the cleaning and greening and maintenance
23 of our park spaces. We really value them in district
24 33 and across the city. We've been advised that it's

2 due to a lack of HRA referrals that we don't have as
3 many workers in place.

4 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Right.

5 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: But I have to say, and
6 this is not on you, but I just find that deeply
7 problematic when we have record numbers of people
8 receiving food stamps and cash assistance right now.
9 HRA's roles are growing and growing and growing. How
10 are we not connecting those individuals to
11 opportunities to work in our parks to make a
12 difference in improving the quality of life in our
13 city? And getting dollars in their pockets? Right?
14 I-- Just why is this not working? And how are we
15 cutting this program when it makes such a difference?

16 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes. Thank you so much
17 for the question and for your recognition of how
18 important our POP workers are, both to our work on
19 the ground, and then also, it's a great career path.
20 And we have wonderful examples of people starting off
21 in the POP program and becoming very important
22 members of our-- of our team at the parks department.

23 So in terms of the numbers and the cut, the
24 issue-- the reason why the lower lack of referrals is
25 that there is currently no mandatory work assignment

2 for New Yorkers on cash assistance. When there was a
3 mandatory work assignment, there were more referrals,
4 there were more people coming to us. That was
5 eliminated. And so without that there is-- there is
6 not the same number of people coming in.

7 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Unfortunately, we'll see
8 what happens in these federal negotiations, and the
9 impact that may have.

10 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah.

11 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: It is directly related.
12 But even without the mandate, we have record numbers
13 of people on the rolls.

14 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah.

15 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I-- Just like this, to me
16 is a question of: Are we doing the outreach? Are we
17 engaging individuals and connecting them to the
18 opportunities, even if they're not mandated to be
19 there?

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah. Thank you for the
21 question. And we completely agree. And we don't
22 just rely on HRA referrals, we've actually been doing
23 a lot of active recruiting ourselves to bring people
24 in. In terms of the cut. We are currently-- there
25 were approximately 2000 slots that existed before the

2 PEG, and there will be approximately 1800 after the
3 PEG is realized. So we are not expecting that there
4 will be a huge decrease in the number of people in
5 this program from what we've been experiencing. And
6 as I said, we do continue to push for and work to
7 recruit new people. We're doing that ourselves. And
8 we agree it's an important program and important ways
9 to get the boots on the ground that are--

10 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I've been involved in
11 setting up outreach initiatives in our HRA job
12 centers. They are really dynamic, effective places
13 to reach people at scale. And I'd hope that the
14 Parks Department could do more to connect directly to
15 the people who are there, so they understand the
16 opportunities they have at Parks. It would make such
17 a difference in each of our districts. So if there's
18 anything we can do, I'm fortunate to have a couple of
19 those centers in our district. If you'd like to
20 partner and explore any partner-- any opportunities
21 there, we're happy to help. And thank you for the
22 work that you guys are doing, and to everyone in
23 Brooklyn Parks as well, we appreciate you. Thank
24 you.

25 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Farías
3 followed by Sanchez.

4 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you chairs. Hi
5 Commissioner. High Team Parks. I'm glad-- Thank
6 you all for being here. I'd like to ask a couple of
7 capital questions. But before that, I see a very
8 important question here about the high pollen count.
9 There are some that say the high pollen count is due
10 to the planting of too many male trees, which leads
11 to higher-than-natural levels of pollen. Does the
12 Department agree with this hypothesis?

13 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Jennifer, I'm going to
14 let you take that as our tree expert.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Thank you for
16 that question. I wasn't prepared for it. But I do
17 have an answer.

18 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, great.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: We don't really
20 agree with that hypothesis. There-- There are some
21 very strong proponents of that hypothesis, and
22 whether that individual idea is true or not, you
23 really have to look across the board at all
24 vegetation. It's not just trees that cause
25 allergies. It's also you know, sort of the-- the

2 weeds in the vacant lots. All those sorts of things
3 are-- can be attributed to seasonal allergies, and
4 they are seasonal and the trees are there year round,
5 and we don't plant male trees on purpose, except for
6 the Ginko.

7 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: Got it. Okay. It still
8 sounds like the fight against the patriarchy must
9 continue. But thank you for that. I just saw this
10 question and thought it was great. Okay. So I also
11 want to say I agree, you know, with the sentiments
12 that my colleagues have expressed earlier on the PEP
13 officers, around our vacancy reductions, public
14 pools, particularly as well. And I wanted to know
15 what-- what's the breakdown of the \$4.2 million of
16 capital investments needed for Parks? Like, can we
17 get some big bucket breakdown of that?

18 Particularly-- I'll give some more context.
19 Particularly, I'd like to know if there's-- what
20 chunk of that amount includes like the local parks
21 that need capital investments. Like every year, you
22 folks give us how much is needed to rectify,
23 renovate, or upgrade some of our parks? Is that
24 included in this capital?

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2 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember.
3 I have to say I'm not exactly clear on your question.
4 Tell me the amount, the dollar amount, and the--

5 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: Or the percentage of-- of
6 what's like the local parks versus some of like, like
7 something like a Central Park, that's really big and
8 might need capital investments? Do we have a
9 difference between like, concrete parks versus openly
10 green space parks? Or like, is there a different
11 breakdowns for what that amount is?

12 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: So you're asking what we
13 spend on parks-- on individual parks?

14 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: We have-- We \$4.2 billion
15 of capital investments needed for Parks Department?
16 Correct? That's what I see in front of me.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Yeah, I'm sorry. I
18 don't think we're familiar with that figure, that
19 \$4.2. I'm not--

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah, that number--

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Sorry.

22 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: So I have in fiscal 2024,
23 a capital commitment plan a total of 4.2 billion plan
24 from the 23--

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Oh. In the existing
3 capital plan.

4 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Yeah.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Yes. That may be the
6 case.

7 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Yes.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Okay. Yes.

9 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes, that's what our--

10 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: I hope so--

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Of that existing-- so
12 that's-- Sure.

13 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: --because that's what's on
14 my paper.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Sure. Sorry.

16 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Okay. In that, is-- does
17 that include the breakdown borough-by-borough,
18 community-by-community of the local parks and-- or is
19 this larger scale things like piping needed? Like,
20 that's what I'm trying to figure out.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Sure. I see. So
22 yeah, the existing capital plan is applied pretty
23 broadly citywide, system-wide. And, you know, so we
24 can definitely get you, you know, in terms of how
25 that breaks down borough by borough. But it can vary

2 from, you know, huge parks going through major
3 renovations to smaller targeted, you know, capital
4 projects as well. It sort of varies widely in that
5 scale. In addition, you know, to facility
6 improvements, which are, you know, a big-dollar
7 figure for a single project, just because of the
8 nature of that work. So it can vary quite widely,
9 but we're happy to follow up and give you sort of a
10 rundown, if you will, of the existing capital plan,
11 for sure.

12 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, and how are you
13 folks planning within what was given here and
14 projections on-- we're like-- I have-- I have a
15 couple of parks that individually need renovations
16 that are over \$13 million. And that obviously, will
17 gradually most likely get higher, as they have with
18 my predecessors who have ignored to address them,
19 they've only gotten more costly. How are we looking
20 at those projections and including this number? And
21 when we give this number of our commitment plan for -
22 - you know, what's in front of me, here is four years
23 -- is the goal to actually get the full amount or
24 renovate those parks in a timely manner? Or are we
25 just rolling the debt over every single time?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: So capital dollars do
3 roll from year to year, but, you know, but-- but just
4 to be clear, you know, that-- the existing capital
5 plan is based upon, you know, cost estimates, and
6 that are sort of where-- at the time-- the increase
7 in price over time is accounted for. So for the
8 existing, you know, funding, which is in place for
9 soon-to-be-active or active projects, you know, that
10 accounts for the passage of time, because there is
11 inflation, and those costs do rise over time.

12 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: We build in an escalator
13 amount, so to anticipate what the cost will be
14 actually when it's in construction.

15 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, so like, if-- So,
16 for example, if the Admin had-- gives \$4.2 billion to
17 parks, right, just as an example, you know, like,
18 everyone relax, right? We got \$4.2 billion. That
19 means every product that has come in front of
20 individual members, for example, as capital need
21 would be included in that estimate.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: So that's-- so that's
23 not need. That's existing-- That's existing funding
24 that will be going towards an active project. There
25 may be additional needs. That's what's--

2 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: So this number could be
3 higher is what we're saying.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: If you're if you're
5 inquiring as to the capital needs that exists
6 throughout the system, it-- by-- Yes, by definition,
7 it would certainly be higher.

8 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: Okay. Okay. That's what
9 I'm trying to-- I guess that's what I'm trying to
10 figure out. Because there's-- there's a huge
11 difference to what's needed to maintain our current
12 parks right now versus what's needed to upgrade them.
13 Correct? So the \$13 million estimate I have on
14 Harding Park, for example, isn't necessarily included
15 in this, because it's not required to what's needed
16 to maintain it.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Or if it's currently
18 not funded. It's not-- and I apologize, not being
19 familiar with it, whether it's funded or not.

20 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: Definitely not funded.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Well, there you go.
22 Then, yeah. Then in that case, it wouldn't be
23 included in the \$4.4. Or I should-- you know,
24 actually it's \$8.8 over 10 years, \$8.8 billion. But,

2 for example, Harding Park, if it's simply an
3 estimate, hasn't-- funding hasn't been provided--

4 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: It's not.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: --it would not be
6 included in that number. That's correct.

7 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Okay. I mean that-- You
8 know, other than, you know, the obvious need of us
9 getting to 1% as Chair Krishnan has been fighting for
10 with the rest of us on the Council, you know, this
11 this is what's really concerning to me is like, we
12 don't have real estimates of what's-- I mean, we do.
13 We do have those projections, and we understand
14 what's needed to upkeep and maintain our parks. But
15 when we're coming down to the locality. Like folks
16 in my community desperately need the upgrades in
17 these parks that I can't control, predecessors have
18 ignored at exorbitant amounts, like \$13 million for
19 one park, when individual members only get \$5 million
20 in capital. How are you folks looking at-- like, has
21 this dialogue started with the Admin in really
22 addressing some of the higher needs estimates that we
23 have, and maybe, whether that's figuring out creative
24 ways to lower through RFP or to get new estimates or

2 reevaluations or look at parks in different ways to
3 lower that amount?

4 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Mm-hmm.

5 COUNCILMEMBER FARIAS: And I'll stop there with--
6 having, you know, is that something that's happening?

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes, absolutely. We are
8 always looking out, you know, across the entire city
9 and looking where we need to make investments and how
10 we're going to make those investments. And we look
11 at things like-- we advocate for funding for
12 everything from state of good repair, so that we're
13 addressing, you know, pathways or roofs, and also
14 taking on bigger capital projects. And you know, a
15 good example, we have the Community Parks Initiative,
16 and that's very targeted investment in areas that
17 haven't seen any investment in 25 years. And so we
18 received baseline funding to spend \$50 million a year
19 over 10 years for the community parks investment.
20 And so that is so that we can-- As we're looking out
21 across boroughs, we can look to commit dollars where
22 they're most needed, and do that equitably based on
23 analysis and data that shows this park hasn't had an
24 investment, we know it's going to need it. We need
25 to be able to move that forward.

2 So through initiatives like that, that's where
3 we're targeting investment in areas of greatest need,
4 and planning for that future.

5 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, great. I mean,
6 obviously, I knew that you folks were probably
7 already doing that. I do-- I would like to talk
8 offline, maybe post budgets kind of look at some of
9 the products in my area. I can think of three off
10 the top of my head that the money is so-- the amount
11 is so large--

12 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah.

13 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: -- the community is high
14 need, as I'm sure many of my colleagues are, and
15 figuring out ways to either use different avenues or
16 revaluations to kind of make those deep investments.
17 But thank you so much. And thank you Chairs.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Sanchez,
19 followed by Narcisse.

20 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much Chairs.
21 and good morning, Commissioner. Good morning, Matt--
22 uh, Deputy Commissioner Drury.

23 So, thank you so much for answering questions
24 regarding the vacancies in the Parks Department. Can

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2 you just-- I missed the actual whole number? What
3 was the-- the full vacancy number?

4 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: We actually have a fairly
5 low va-- we have a 2% vacancy rate.

6 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: 2%. Okay. And so when
7 we talk about the-- when you were talking about those
8 hard to hire positions, like climbers, and pruners,
9 and lifeguards, those are-- those in particular are
10 the ones that have a higher vacancy rate.

11 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Absolutely. Yes. Yup.

12 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Well, I-- My first
13 question is, because I was-- I happened to be-- well,
14 I'm always in constant communication with our Bronx
15 Commissioner, and shout out to her. Thank you for
16 being so responsive. And I happened to be driving by
17 a dirty lot in our district that had been, you know,
18 littered for a very long time. And it turned out to
19 be there was a whole, you know, agency, she-says/he-
20 says, all kind of pointing fingers. But it was a
21 Parks property in the end, and we got it cleaned up.
22 And I happened to be driving by on the day that they
23 cleaned up, and there were a bunch of folks with, you
24 know, all kinds of equipments because it's on a-- on
25 a cliff. And they were scaling down, and all of

2 that. And so I had to pull over and stop and talk to
3 folks and just understand a little bit. And what
4 they shared was that they were participants with the
5 HOPE Program in the Bronx. They had been trained to
6 do the scaling and the climbing and all of that. And
7 so my first question is: Does Parks have a
8 particular budget to partner with organizations that
9 can train these hard-to-fill positions? And if so,
10 what is that budget, and what do those partnerships
11 look like?

12 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you for the
13 question, Councilmember. We do partner with a whole
14 host of organizations across the city -- absolutely --
15 -- that help us with cleaning, maintaining, and
16 getting work done in our parks. On these hard-to-
17 recruit positions, like lifeguards. We have-- We are
18 part of an extensive citywide taskforce that is--
19 there's actually a couple of them. One is driven by
20 City Hall that has all the city agencies. And then
21 there's a another task force that we're part of that
22 includes Legal Aid, and the YMCA, and ABNY, and Swim
23 Strong, and a whole bunch of different programs that
24 are all focused on the same thing which is building
25 this corps of lifeguards.

2 So absolutely. We partner where and when we can
3 to bring in more people for these hard-to-recruit
4 titles.

5 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Do you have a budget for-
6 - for those kinds of partnerships?

7 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Uh, no. I mean, the
8 taskforce that we're on, it's not-- it's not
9 budgeted. It is-- it is us, you know, just getting
10 together to share best practices and try and build a
11 corps. The-- The Climber Pruner Program we've talked
12 a lot about today, we were pleased that in this most
13 recent executive budget, we did receive \$3 million,
14 \$3.5 million in funding for-- to build that corpupils
15 of a very-hard-to-recruit title.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: But specific to the
17 example you mentioned, I think it's most accurate to
18 say, you know, the budget for that sort of
19 partnership effort is sort of esconced within the
20 broader maintenance and operations.

21 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Got it.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: And that's not really
23 structured in a way where there's a standalone sort
24 of partnerships budget of that-- of that sort.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, thank you. I'm
3 glancing at the Chair and hoping they won't cut me as
4 I ask my last question, which is really, you know,
5 District 14 in the City Council is one of the lowest-
6 - we have one of the lowest ratios of park space for
7 city residents in the city of New York. And so we
8 really take advantage and appreciate partnership on
9 supplemental programming. So two questions here:
10 How does the Parks Department distribute supplemental
11 programming? You know, like those-- those parks
12 associates that you talked about earlier, things like
13 that. How do you program those across the city?
14 One. And then on the on the capital side, there's a
15 particular park in my district Aqueduct Walk, which
16 is a magical place, but has a section of it that has
17 been closed for maybe a decade or two. And we've
18 been talking about in the community reactivating that
19 space. There's a bridge that used to be there on
20 Burnside Avenue, rebuilding that bridge and
21 activating the closed section. So for something like
22 that, the Aqueduct Walk, does parks have any long
23 term-plans to reactivate that space?

24 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Okay. Thank you,
25 Councilmember for the question. In terms of

2 distributing Parks' programming, we do that in a
3 number of ways. I mean, we have a public programs
4 team that we look to deploy equitably across the
5 city, and make sure that we, you know, through our
6 Rec Centers, through our shape up, through a number
7 of different opportunities to provide programming on
8 the ground in different parks. We also work closely
9 with a number of different partners. Our
10 Partnerships For Parks Division does a great job of
11 building support locally, building friends of groups,
12 providing tools and capacity building. So we both
13 are looking to, through our Public Programs Division,
14 enliven parks through programming, but then also very
15 much work with a variety of different grassroots
16 organizations through Partnerships For Parks, looking
17 to build more programming and more activity on the
18 ground. It's also a big part of our volunteer
19 efforts, get people out and active in parks and
20 working in parks. We know that it's really important
21 for community building to bring people together
22 around service and work in parks.

23 In terms of Aqueduct Walk, that is, I think--
24 there is a whole planning effort, I know, around
25 that.

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Yeah. I think it's--
3 there's-- as you're aware, I think there are longer
4 term conversations about that stretch, you know,
5 it's-- you know, a unique configuration, you know,
6 and presents, I think, some challenges from a from a
7 planning and other-- but I know discussions are
8 underway and will continue. And, you know, I think
9 we love reactivating our public spaces, and we want
10 to continue to work in partnership towards that.

11 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much. I'll
12 be following up.

13 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Narcisse
15 followed by Dinowitz.

16 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Good afternoon, and
17 thank you, Chairs. Good afternoon, Commissioner.
18 And thank you for the pickleball, because right now,
19 I have [inaudible] for a millennium, so thank you.

20 I have-- there is a call to renovate and build a
21 new comfort station and, you know, bathrooms, but one
22 of the things that, you know, bothers me a lot: It's
23 so expensive. I want to know if it's the materials,
24 or it is the manpower, what's causing it so much, and

25

2 what have you done to decrease or do something about
3 the price, so we can have more?

4 COUNCILMEMBER DONOGHUE: Thank you Councilmember
5 Narcisse. That's such a good question and something
6 we are very focused on. In terms of the price and
7 why the pricing can be high. It's for a variety of
8 factors. Often if a comfort station needs to be
9 renovated or-- or building a new comfort station, you
10 have to establish a sewer connection so that the dig-
11 - depending on how long it-- how far is the distance
12 from where the sewer connection is, the water from
13 the street. Things like that, those kind of intense
14 capital parts of the project can absolutely add to
15 the cost. Electric, utility connections, bringing in
16 that what you need in terms of making a functioning
17 comfort station can add to the cost.

18 We have done a great deal in terms of looking to
19 reduce the cost of our comfort stations and looking
20 at a variety of different ways that we can do that,
21 everything from looking at streamlining the design,
22 so making it so that every comfort station we're not
23 reinventing the wheel, we're looking to have the
24 design be as streamlined as possible. We're looking
25 at everything from prefabricated structures, to

2 trailer facilities, to something called the Portland
3 Loo, which has worked in other areas that we're
4 looking at adapting that's, you know, a single
5 person. We're looking to-- at all different ways to
6 reduce the costs. Absolutely.

7 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: So thank you. I
8 appreciate that. Um, the next question, like right
9 now, I have some of my constituents watching me.
10 Garrison Beach. I have a lot of complaints of those
11 trees getting out of control when it comes to
12 sidewalks. It is a safety issue, right? Yes? I
13 mean, last week, sorry-- yesterday I just passed by.
14 But 7225-N: I don't know how many times they called
15 you. That is in Bergen Beach. I went to see it
16 myself. It is a safety issue. There is no sidewalk.
17 And the-- I mean, the tree-- the woods is getting
18 inside the person's home, and is causing so much
19 flood. And when people are walking, they actually--
20 he had witnessed people falling in the front. So
21 when-- According to him, many times they said they
22 come to visit and check the tree. But what should
23 the people do really, when it comes to a safety
24 issues. For seniors, they cannot walk with their
25 roller chairs. They cannot push people on the

2 sidewalk with a wheelchair. For me as much as we
3 want to save the trees, but we have to be in mind for
4 safety issues, when it comes to the seniors, the kids
5 playing on the sidewalk. So that, I'm going to leave
6 it to you, like I give you the address already. And
7 the hydrant. According to the Department of Fire
8 Department, they're saying that you're going to take
9 over on the hydrant on the sidewalk or next to the
10 parks. Is that correct? And would you do that? And
11 would the department take that on? To me, it's just
12 like, the shoemaker is the shoemaker, the hairdresser
13 is the hairdresser.

14 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you, Councilmember.
15 We totally agree. And there is not-- We have not
16 heard of or not aware of any plans to take over any
17 hydrants on the street. No.

18 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: All right. So I'm going
19 to leave at that, because a lot of question-- because
20 I'm very much interested in pools. Because we in the
21 46th District only have one little mini, very tiny
22 little pool in Mill Basin. I don't have any pool,
23 and our children need to know how to swim. It is a
24 safety-- it is a life-- you know you can save lives
25 in getting the young folks to learn how to swim. You

2 know how it is for me, especially in the Canarsie
3 area, it is a must. And I'm looking forward to it.
4 We can work on that too. Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Absolutely.

6 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you, Chairs.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We have Dinowitz, followed
8 by Lee. Is she still here?

9 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Well, good afternoon.
10 Thank you, Chairs. First I want to start off by
11 thanking Parks. You're one of my favorite agencies,
12 especially because of your employees. We had a
13 wonderful movie night the other night in
14 Williamsbridge Oval, and your employees were there
15 passing out popcorn and maracas and glowsticks to the
16 kids. It was just really wonderful how much they
17 care not just about their job, but about the
18 communities they serve. So I want to start off by
19 thanking you.

20 What I'm about to ask shouldn't be a surprising
21 question. We-- I've spoken about this at other
22 hearings. It's about your coordination with other
23 agencies. I've brought up your issues with hiring
24 lifeguards in part could be helped by coordinating

2 with SCA, coordinating with DOE, who are here, with
3 places like the pool at Clinton High School.

4 I'm curious to know if there are updates on that
5 and just in general, beyond programming, because I
6 know we've touched on that a lot. One: What your
7 coordination is with other agencies. And I'll give
8 you another example. We have Harris Field in my
9 district, which we're trying to improve, in part
10 because it's used so significantly by local schools,
11 like-- like Bronx Science, Lehman College, and the
12 High School for American Studies, and Clinton High
13 School. What coordination do you do with the DOE to
14 make sure that, if at all possible, maintenance of
15 the field is maintained, recognizing that students
16 use it. And the second question I have is:
17 Internally what sort-- what the coordination looks
18 like within your own agency. For instance,
19 Williamsbridge Oval. We have a rec center there
20 that's open, you know, until after sundown, but there
21 are no lights in the park. And there's other
22 programming that they love to do in the park like
23 football teams play there. But there are no lights
24 in the park. So both coordination-- where one New

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2 York City coordinates with other agencies, and again,
3 within your own agency.

4 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you so much for the
5 question, Councilmember. In terms of coordination
6 around pools and lifeguards, there has been so much
7 of that since September, and I'm so--

8 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Capital. Sorry.
9 Because-- No. Because I know we've discussed, and I
10 really value the program. I just want to make sure
11 my question is about the capital. So...

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Sure. And I-- We
13 did-- We did-- To be clear, and I think we were clear
14 at the time, that we don't have a role in the capital
15 plan for DOE facilities. But we did refer the
16 question back to SCA, and I thought they were getting
17 in touch, so... If we need to follow back up, we're
18 happy to do that. But to be clear, as it's a DOE
19 facility, Parks doesn't play an active role in that
20 specific project. We do partner with them in a
21 variety of ways on the programming side in terms of--

22 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Right.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: But-- But specific to
24 capital, we don't really play a role in-- in that
25 sort of plan for that facility. So I-- My

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2 understanding was that SCA and DOE were playing to
3 get back to you soon.

4 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Right, we spoke.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Oh, okay.

6 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I guess, as an agency,
7 as the City of New York, and-- is the administration
8 at all interested in making sure there is
9 coordination between your agencies. This isn't just
10 a referral question. This is about doing the work to
11 make sure that our kids, our youth can, in the short
12 future, become lifeguards here in New York City. And
13 then of course, another example is my question about
14 Harris Field.

15 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Yeah. So thank you for
16 the question. And absolutely, this is an
17 administration that is keenly focused on interagency
18 collaboration. I mean, just look at where we fall
19 under in this Administration. We're under the Deputy
20 Mayor for Operations, which means we're under the
21 same deputy mayor as DEP, DOT, Buildings, the Taxi
22 and Limousine Commission, which is really helpful in
23 terms of making sure that there's constant dialogue.
24 Those are entities that we-- sister agencies that we
25 interact with a whole lot. And it's really important

2 that we're connected to, and under this
3 administration, that's been absolutely something that
4 has been prioritized for sure.

5 In terms of maintenance, and in particular,
6 Williamsburg Oval, it's something we can look at in
7 terms of the lights and see about lighting. We are
8 very focused on making sure that areas are safe and
9 well lit. So it's something we can look into for
10 sure.

11 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I guess it's an example
12 of, I guess, an overarching question within your
13 within your own agency: Do you look at spaces that
14 have other programming and say, you know, we need to
15 make it, you know, a more holistic approach to
16 approaching the park, to make sure that when people
17 go to the community, the rec center there, that there
18 are the other facilities there to keep them safe, and
19 perhaps provide opportunities to other people in the
20 district?

21 You know, I would say I love hearing about the
22 coordination. And I do appreciate you referring it
23 over. But again, I think it's more than just
24 referring something to another agency. I think
25 that's sort of sort of the problem is that we are one

2 city. Each agency gets their own budget. But
3 fundamentally, there is money in New York City for--
4 for all of us.

5 And what I'd really love to hear next time is not
6 just that it's being referred over, but that you're
7 really working in concert with any other city agency
8 to look for-- forward to a more efficient and better
9 future for your department and for all of New York
10 City.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRURY: Yeah, and sorry for
12 not being clear earlier, and the Commissioner can
13 speak to this better, but for example, I know we're
14 involved in an interagency taskforce, like taking a
15 longer term look at the and about the lifeguard
16 staffing crisis. And capital improvements to
17 existing facilities is absolutely on the table as
18 part of that discussion. So that-- that
19 conversation is certainly happening broadly.
20 Obviously, the dollar figures are, you know,
21 considerable, et cetera, et cetera, but to be clear
22 there is definitely interagency conversation and
23 capital improvement of various facilities, whether
24 it's Parks' facilities, or DOE facilities are

2 absolutely being viewed as-- as a key component of
3 that discussion.

4 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: That's great. I think
5 that is the first time that has been said at this
6 hearing. So I appreciate that new piece of
7 information. And one other thing is, I do want to
8 also mention, as many colleagues have heard how dire
9 this tree root situation is that people with
10 disabilities, older adults can't traverse their own
11 streets, because the roots are uplifting the
12 sidewalks, and it's-- it is a problem in New York
13 City that-- that we can't walk on our own streets.
14 And I do want to thank the Chairs, Chair Shekar--
15 Chair Krishnan and Brannan, especially Finance Chair
16 Brannan, who has been doing all of these hearings,
17 and been doing a great job. So thank you Chair
18 Brannan and Krishnan. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Now we have Councilmembers
20 Lee followed by Stevens.

21 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you. I'll try to be
22 quick. Thank you, Commissioner for also coming out
23 to my district for the Captain Dermody Triangle.

24 As you mentioned in the testimony, it's a small
25 space, but definitely very, very meaningful

2 historically for the community. And the fact that
3 it's going to be ADA accessible is amazing, so that a
4 lot of the older adults in that neighborhood can
5 utilize it. So thank you.

6 Quick question: So trees and tree stumps, tree
7 roots. That's, you know, obviously a hot topic for
8 us, especially in Queens, but there was \$2 million, I
9 know, that we had asked the administration to include
10 for the tree stump removals, and I noticed that that
11 was not in the executive plan. So I was just
12 wondering what your thoughts were, if that's
13 something that we can push to include, because it is
14 such an issue with all the tree stumps that need to
15 be removed.

16 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Yes. And thank you,
17 Councilmember for the question, and the support and
18 interest in all things trees. So just to clarify, so
19 we do receive \$2 million in baseline funding for
20 Mayoral tree stump removal funding in addition to the
21 \$2 million in one-shot funding that the Council did
22 in FY 23.

23 And that, you know, I have to say that funding
24 from the Council is incredibly important and very
25 much appreciated. As you know, the budget

2 conversation is ongoing. And we will continue to
3 work certainly with the Mayor, OMB, and the Council
4 for to-- you know, shape the final budget process,
5 but we understand the importance of that. We are so
6 pleased that the Council does as well, and we've
7 appreciated the support.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you so much. And then
9 just to follow up on some of the comments that our
10 colleagues have mentioned about Dragonetti as the
11 contractor, because tree pruning is such an important
12 issue in our district, because we've had a lot of
13 calls, I would say the number-- one of the top calls
14 we get in our district are around issues related to
15 trees, especially when it comes to how it impacts
16 their-- their properties, and the homeowners, and the
17 pipes as well as the-- the roots that are going into
18 the actual houses. And so one question I had about
19 the RFP process specifically is-- because I know that
20 the comments, you're saying is that they're one of
21 the few that are qualified. So my question is-- is
22 how often does that RFP get released? Is it every--
23 Is it a five-year contract? Is it a-- What's the
24 term for that? And when was the last time that the
25 criteria specifically for the RFP was reevaluated?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Thank you,
3 Councilmember for that question. I'll take that.

4 There are multiple contracts, and they each have
5 different timeframes associated with them. Many are
6 just one-year contracts that have renewal clauses,
7 and some of the tree planting contracts could be a
8 little bit longer than that. Sometimes they're more
9 like two years. Most contracts are only a year long.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, so are there elements,
11 do you think, of that RFP that could be looked at, in
12 your opinion, that would perhaps include or be more
13 inclusive of other contractors that could be looked
14 at?

15 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Yeah. So as I stated
16 earlier, we've done a lot of work around that,
17 Councilmember, to-- and in fact, have expanded, the
18 pool of contractors. We really looked to bring in
19 more MWBE contractors. Jennifer's team has done a
20 great job and looking to expand that pool. It's
21 something we're very focused on.

22 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, great. Um, and then I
23 just wanted to echo everything that Councilmember
24 Williams had mentioned about the tree root issues.
25 And I guess the one piggyback question I have from

2 what she had mentioned was, you know, because you all
3 are in charge of the criteria of when trees can be
4 removed and pruned, I just-- just wanted to dig a
5 little deeper into that, in terms of if you could--
6 is-- is it because of the canopy issue where if we
7 take one out, then one has to be replaced and what
8 would-- I guess what-- I'm just trying to understand
9 what the issues are in terms of removing problematic
10 trees, like if it can be replaced, to one-to-one
11 ratio, so that there's no, you know, we're not losing
12 anything? Is that something that we could look at?

13 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Yes. And thank you for
14 the question. I mean, for us at Parks, we're looking
15 at tree canopy overall. And the benefits, especially
16 of mature trees, far outweigh a newly planted tree.
17 And so it's going to take 10 or 15 years. Even
18 though there is that one to one replacement, and we
19 recognize you take out a tree, you can plant a new
20 one. But the issue is, is that a large mature tree
21 offers a whole lot more environmental benefits. So
22 we are going to look very-- you know, as the steward
23 of the trees in streets and parks, we're going to
24 look very closely at taking them out because, you
25 know, they absolutely help clean our air and are so

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2 beneficial for the environment. So we try and-- our
3 emphasis is on protecting as much as we can.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

5 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Protect and preserve as
6 much as we can.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you so much. And I
8 know that there is a backlog for the pruning. But
9 anything else on that that can be done, so that we
10 don't have to completely get rid of the more mature
11 trees would be awesome. And that's it. Thank you.
12 Chairs.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Councilmember
14 Stevens.

15 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Hi, good afternoon. How
16 are you guys doing? Nice to see you, Commissioner.
17 Just really two quick questions. In the executive
18 budget, the Bronx is facing the largest decrease in
19 the maintenance and operation budget across all
20 boroughs. How will this-- How is this determined,
21 and how will this impact Bronx parks?

22 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you for the
23 question, although I'm just not sure in terms of--
24 that there's a-- the largest decrease from the-- for
25 the Bronx. That would not be the case. Where--

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2 Could you just tell us where-- what you're referring
3 to?

4 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Yes. Let me-- Let me
5 look into that, and then I'll get back to you because
6 that was one of the questions that my staff sent me.
7 So let me just ask them.

8 But my next question is: Many Bronx schools have
9 no access to outdoor spaces or playgrounds. How are
10 we working with schools to ensure that they have
11 access to local parks and green space? Many of the
12 principals I've spoken to are not aware of-- of these
13 options. So just thinking about how are we
14 coordinating with them, and I have a number of
15 schools in my district who don't have playgrounds or
16 access.

17 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Okay, thank you for the
18 question. Do you mean how they could use--

19 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Nearby parks. Yeah.

20 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: --a park by a school. So
21 generally, that is-- that is just a permit if it's
22 over a certain number. And we can certainly put you
23 in touch with, or put the principal's in touch with
24 how to go through that process for applying for a
25 permit. But we absolutely welcome, and I have all

2 kinds of schools that use our parks all the time,
3 especially at this time of year. So we would be
4 happy to talk about how that process works. And so
5 just-- I just want to make sure. So they would have
6 to submit a permit for all the times they would want
7 to use the park. Is there some way, like, I know I
8 have a bill on this around trying to get them access
9 to outdoor space. But just-- I'm just making sure I
10 understand. They would have to have a permit for
11 every time they will want to use a park, whether
12 that's for like play, you know, like recess, or gym,
13 or things like that. Because like, I have a number
14 of schools that do not have any play space or
15 anything. And so I'm trying to work to get more
16 options for them.

17 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Got it. Thank you. And
18 thank you for that clarification. No, I mean, I was
19 thinking if it's a large event, or something like a
20 field day or something--

21 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: No. No. It's not. It's
22 like they have no space. Like literally, I have
23 about five schools in my district that has no
24 playground or nothing. And so even for recess,
25 they're typically indoors. And so I'm trying to make

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2 sure that we have access to whatever nearby green
3 space, so our young people can have fresh air to
4 play.

5 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Absolutely. And they
6 should. They have open access to the parks that are
7 close by and in, you know, within walking distance.
8 And there shouldn't be any issue or problem with them
9 doing that or walking to the park. But we can make
10 sure that you connect with the Borough Commissioner,
11 you know, to ease of facilitating that, but there
12 absolutely shouldn't be any-- any issue with you
13 know, a classroom going to enjoy a park at recess.

14 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Okay, great. I will
15 definitely follow up, because I know the Borough
16 Commissioner had some ideas, and so I definitely
17 wanted to make sure we got on record, because she's
18 already been brewing in her head and around in my
19 good. Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Yeah.

21 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: And I'll follow up with
22 other questions later. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thanks so much,
24 Councilmember Stevens. I know it's been a long
25 morning. I think we're almost-- we're almost there.

2 I have three brief questions. And I'm aware that
3 when a politician says brief, it's meaningless, but I
4 will try. One is on the-- We've heard a lot about
5 trees. And the Arborist Apprenticeship Program, in
6 the FY24 exec budget, there are 50 new baseline
7 positions for an apprenticeship program to train new
8 climbers and pruners. We've heard a lot of questions
9 about this and the importance of more support in that
10 area.

11 Is there any mechanism that Parks has to ensure
12 that those who undergo the training will stay within
13 Parks as opposed to leaving to the private sector?
14 How do we keep them? And will this also reduce the
15 reliance on tree contactors like Dragonetti and
16 others who may be problematic?

17 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thanks so much for the
18 question, Chair Krishnan, and we are really thrilled
19 about the funding for this new program. As I've
20 said, we believe that it's just a great opportunity,
21 great career doesn't require a college degree, it
22 could really build a great career within the Parks
23 Department.

24 In terms of opportunities, you're right, if
25 people get trained, it can be that then they're very

2 desirable to other organizations. I think that what
3 we're going to-- what we specify is just the
4 importance of the mission and working for Parks
5 overall, and that it is a great job and a great
6 career path. And that we have a lot of good examples
7 of people who have been with Parks for a number of
8 years and advanced in their career at Parks. So
9 we'll be doing everything we can to make sure that
10 we're providing an environment that-- where people
11 want to stay and that they'll, with that training,
12 you know, they'll be able to experience a good, you
13 know, career within Parks.

14 The second part of your question? Was there a
15 second part?

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: No. I think that-- Oh
17 yes. Will that reduce the reliance on--

18 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Oh, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: --other tree contractors
20 that are more problematic.

21 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Yes. To a certain
22 degree. Absolutely. As I said, this is a hard to
23 recruit position within Parks. We want to build this
24 corps of individuals. But with over 600,000 trees on
25 city streets, you know it would take an incredible

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2 corps of people to be able to handle that-- you know,
3 those big-block pruning aspects on our own, so it is
4 going to-- while it will help us, in order to build
5 that corps internally, we would still need-- in order
6 to be able to do it well, and keep to a pruning cycle
7 that is appropriate for the health and maintenance of
8 their trees, it would be a combination of both.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what will be the
10 average pay for apprentices during the apprenticeship
11 program? What would their starting salary be for
12 those who are offered full-time positions as climbers
13 and pruners?

14 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Let me hold-- [TO DEPUTY
15 COMMISSIONER GREENFELD:] Do you know the answer to
16 that?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Well, the-- the
18 apprentices or the trainees are going to be recruited
19 from existing Parks employees. So they keep their
20 same salary as they sort of move from one position to
21 the other. It's a different-- it's basically a new
22 assignment for an existing title.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. Okay. Looking
24 forward to hearing more about the program. Glad to
25 see it in this year's budget, too. And then moving

2 to our natural areas, it was good to see \$2.4 million
3 in the executive budget for trails. We at the
4 council had put it in our response for \$3.5 million
5 to support the care of natural areas in FY 24. What,
6 if any, conversations have there been to take the
7 next step of funding those resources for our natural
8 areas?

9 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you for the
10 question. And yes, we were also really pleased to
11 see this. We are very anxious to be able to make our
12 trails and natural areas more accessible to New
13 Yorkers. With over 12,000 acres of open space, we
14 saw during COVID just how important it is to get New
15 Yorkers out and enjoying our natural areas. So we
16 are thrilled to be able to have this expansion,
17 formalize our trails. And in terms of additional
18 funding, it's an ongoing conversation. We are in
19 conversation with City Hall, with OMB, and will
20 continue to be so until the budget is finalized.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. And then we can
22 follow up on this at a subsequent hearing as well,
23 but I would ask, if you can, look into more
24 information as well about the Riverside Park
25 Overbuild. I had the opportunity to visit it last

2 week. I understand there's a DOT restoration project
3 happening. But there's a big concern, and I saw it
4 myself, of the parkland over there, and it being
5 restored after the big transportation project. It
6 looks very dangerous right now, very concerning. We
7 can discuss that next time. But I would just ask
8 that you all look into what funding-- because I don't
9 see it's absent now, but what funding will be there
10 to restore the parkland in Riverside Park after that
11 project, and what the timeline will be for it.

12 And on that note, I just wanted to say before
13 turning it over to chair Brannan, thank you all so
14 much, Commissioner Donoghue, all the Parks leadership
15 here, Deputy Commissioner Greenfeld, Deputy
16 Commissioner Braddock and Drury. Thank you all so
17 much for your work every day for our park system.
18 We've got a lot more to do to get to where we need to
19 be, and again before, as I stated, to get to the
20 stated commitment by this mayor for 1% for our budget
21 for Parks, but we want to make sure we get you those
22 resources to continue making sure that all New
23 Yorkers have access to quality green space. So thank
24 you all for your testimony today.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, thank you,
3 Matt, thank you. We look forward to working with
4 you.

5 COMMISSIONER DONOGHUE: Thank you, you as well.
6 Thanks so much.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we'll take a quick
8 break. And then we're going to hear from Department
9 of Education because we're running late. Thank you.

10 [10 MINUTES SILENCE]

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, good afternoon.
12 We're ready to begin our final executive budget
13 hearing of the day. We're focused on the New York
14 City Department of Education, and I'm pleased to be
15 joined now by my colleague Councilmember Rita Joseph,
16 Chair of the Committee on Education. We've been-- In
17 addition to the folks that have been here since this
18 morning, we've been joined by Councilmembers Louis,
19 Brewer, and Krishnan. We have Hanks on Zoom.

20 Welcome to Chancellor Banks and your team. Thank
21 you all for joining us today to answer our questions.
22 Just to set the table: On April 26 2023, the
23 Administration released the Executive Financial Plan
24 for FY 23 to 27 with a proposed FY 24 budget of
25 \$106.7 billion. DOE's proposed FY 2024 budget of

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2 \$30.6 billion represents 28.6% of the
3 Administration's total FY 24 budget in the Executive
4 Plan. This is a decrease of \$174.1 million, or 0.6%
5 from the \$30.7 billion originally allocated in the FY
6 24 preliminary plan. This net decrease is due to
7 several actions, largest of which is a fringe-- a
8 fringe benefit reduction of \$305.6 million.

9 DOE also projected a headcount decrease of 1,172
10 positions, compared to its headcount as of adoption
11 FY 23 last year. The decrease consists of 355 fewer
12 full-time non-pedagogical positions and 817 fewer
13 full-time pedagogical positions, and comes from
14 vacancy reductions in a preliminary plan as well as a
15 reduction in central and field administrative titles
16 at DOE's central office.

17 My questions today will largely focus on the
18 federal funding impact on DOE budget, as well as
19 enrollment levels, spending on Carter Cases, and
20 preschoolers with disabilities as well as public arts
21 education.

22 Last week, we held our hearing on Libraries and
23 Cultural Affairs, and the importance of our cultural
24 sector to the city's economy, as well as arts and
25 cultural education in our schools as a big factor in

2 how that sector grows and stays vibrant year after
3 year. We need all parts of our city to recognize the
4 value of arts in our schools, not just the Council,
5 and I look forward to hearing more from the
6 chancellor on this and other topics.

7 So I'm now going to turn to my Co-Chair for this
8 hearing Chair of the Committee on Education,
9 Councilmember Rita Joseph for her opening statement.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Brannan.
11 Good afternoon and welcome to the Education Committee
12 hearing on the fiscal 2024 executive budget. This
13 hearing will focus on the executive budget proposal
14 for the Department of Education for fiscal year 2024,
15 and school year 2023 to 2024.

16 We will begin the hearing with a focus on
17 department's expense budget. We will be hearing from
18 Chancellor David Banks on the agency's operating
19 budget and priorities for the upcoming fiscal school
20 year. The Department of Education fiscal 2024
21 executive budget totals \$30.6 billion, a decrease
22 approximately \$500 million from the fiscal 2023
23 adopted budget. Since the adopted budget added
24 multiple new needs such as climate education, food
25 education in schools, as well as modification such as

2 reducing planned 3K seats by \$284 million, adding
3 approximately \$300 million in additional costs for
4 Carter Cases and other programmatic changes.

5 While we acknowledge the department has responded
6 to changing student population needs by providing
7 additional funding to Project Open Arms, the
8 executive budget fails to include much-needed support
9 as we continue to see an increase in new migrant
10 students being enrolled into schools on a continual
11 basis.

12 The executive budget also fails to make the
13 necessary investments to address the continued
14 growing needs of students, families, and contracted
15 service providers in areas such as special education
16 3K, prompt and expedited contract reimbursements, the
17 increasing need for mental health support, and
18 additional social workers. DOE Executive Budget
19 includes a number of programmatic decreases resulting
20 from dwindling federal stimulus funds, as well as
21 cuts and reallocation of existing programs. Some
22 major program areas in which the budget has reduced
23 include \$58 million in school facilities, \$39.9
24 million in early childhood programs, and \$19 million
25 in special education instruction support.

2 While the looming stimulus fiscal cliff exists in
3 several essential programs such as 3K, community
4 school expansion, Mental Health For All, and more
5 that were funded through federal funds are in
6 jeopardy. The DOE has not put forward a plan on how
7 it would sustain these essential programs.

8 The recent influx of asylum seekers since last
9 spring has placed added stress on DOE's resources.
10 The impact on teachers, administrators, and schools
11 to be creative and scramble at the last minute to
12 provide the necessary support for these students
13 independently have been felt intensely by education
14 community throughout the city.

15 According to the latest data by DOE in December
16 2022, the approximate number of asylum seeker
17 children enrolled in grades K to 12 was 10,186, with
18 the numbers expected to grow the next time DOE
19 tallied this population.

20 This brings me to my next point. Special
21 education at the preliminary budget hearing has
22 stated that Carter Cases would top \$1 billion this
23 school year. And yet DOE budgeted for about \$300
24 million less in the executive budget. These cases
25 are becoming an equity issue, when families are

2 liquidating their savings, and some paying upwards of
3 \$25,000 annually for tuition and legal fees while
4 they wait for DOE to address their child's needs.

5 And for those families that cannot afford, or are
6 not aware of the support, they are faced with
7 enrolling their children and programs where they are
8 not receiving the best opportunity to succeed.

9 Many of my colleagues and I feel that the
10 pandemic has the needs of special education,
11 instruction and services and that without immediate
12 attention, many of our neediest students will fall
13 behind. I find it unsettling that instead of making
14 an investment in fiscal 2024, and in the out years to
15 expand special education services and instruction, we
16 are instead still increasing funding for Carter
17 Cases. Why are we okay with spending that much on
18 lawsuits but not with investing additional dollars
19 into related services and special education support
20 staff? Why are we so focused on saving by reducing
21 vacancies instead of staffing up our schools with
22 adequate support?

23 The state budget has come through with \$500
24 million increase in total state aid funding, which
25 would finance much of the programming that was

2 reduced in DOE's executive budget. Funding that will
3 be put towards proven and successful programming such
4 as Restorative Justice, Community Schools, Mental
5 Health Continuum, Immigrant Family Outreach. Instead
6 of investing in these programs through expiring
7 federal dollars, the DOE must look at making these
8 sustained investments.

9 Some housekeeping: I would like to remind
10 councilmembers that the chancellor is here to testify
11 on the expense budget. Councilmembers will be
12 limited to five minutes in the first round of
13 questions and three minutes in the second round if
14 time allows. Before I conclude, I'd like to thank
15 the finance team, Monica Salladin, Nya Hyatt,
16 Elizabeth Hoffman, Alia Ali, and Education Committee
17 staff, Jan Atwell, Chloe Rivera, and Nadia Francois.
18 I'd like to thank my staff, Giovanni Coleman, Joelle
19 Disvanori, Ranna Vior, and Roslyn Joynville. I would
20 like to introduce my colleagues. [TO CHAIRPERSON
21 BRANNAN:] You already acknowledge them. Okay, thank
22 you Chair.

23 Now without any further I'd like to turn over to
24 my Chair, my Co-Chair.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair Joseph.
3 We've been joined by Councilmembers Gutiérrez, Hanif,
4 Won, Lee, Hanks, Holden, Menin, Schulman, Ayala, and
5 Avilés. I am now I'm going to turn to the Committee
6 Counsel, Mike Twomey, to swear in our witnesses.

7 COUNSEL: Good afternoon. If you raise your
8 right hands, please.

9 Do you affirm that your testimony will be
10 truthful to the best of your knowledge, information
11 and belief and you will honestly and faithfully
12 answer a councilmember questions? David Banks?

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes, I do.

14 COUNSEL: Daniel Weisberg?

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I do.

16 COUNSEL: Emma Vadehra?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I do.

18 COUNSEL: Mark Treyger?

19 MR. TREYGER: Absolutely.

20 COUNSEL: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: All right. Go ahead.

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We should get this on here.

23 Good afternoon. And thank you Chairs Brannan and

24 Joseph, as well as members of the City Council

25 Committee on Finance and Education for inviting me to

2 testify today about the fiscal year 2024 executive
3 budget as Chancellor of New York City public schools.

4 I'm joined as you just said by First Deputy
5 Chancellor Daniel Weisberg, Chief Operating Officer
6 Emma Vadehra, Deputy Chancellor of Early Childhood
7 Education Dr. Cara Ahmed, and Mark Treyger, Executive
8 Director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

9 I'm also joined by several other members from our
10 administration who are available to be called on when
11 necessary, and they include Kenita Lloyd, Deputy
12 Chancellor For Family and Community Engagement,
13 Carolyne Quintana, the Deputy Chancellor of Teaching
14 and Learning, Melissa Ramos, our Chief Of Staff, who
15 also oversees our work on the asylum-seeking
16 families, Mark Rampersant, our Chief Of Safety and
17 Prevention Services, Flavia Puello-Perdomo who is the
18 Chief of Schools for Community Supports and Wellness,
19 Seritta Scott, our Chief Financial Officer, Christina
20 Foti, our Chief Of Special Education, and finally,
21 Sarah Kleinhandler, our Chief Enrollment Officer.

22 It is great to be here with so many colleagues
23 and champions of New York City Public Schools on the
24 City Council. My team and I have greatly enjoyed
25 joining many of you at events, community meetings,

2 and school visits. Your leadership and advocacy
3 truly make a positive difference for our schools. It
4 has also been great seeing and hearing from many of
5 you at our monthly check-ins to hear directly what is
6 happening inside your districts so we can be more
7 accessible and responsive to the needs of your
8 communities.

9 And now I'd like to highlight important progress
10 we have made as a result of your listening to-- of
11 our listening to and engaging with you. Chair
12 Joseph, your leadership in supporting additional
13 shelter bass coordinators to better support our
14 students in temporary housing has been timely and
15 critical, especially in relation to Project Open
16 Arms. So a special thank you as well a deputy
17 speaker Diana Ayala, who has also been supportive of
18 this effort from day one.

19 Chair Brannan We greatly appreciate your voice in
20 addition to those the Majority Leader powers, Chair
21 Joseph, and Councilmember Ossé in advancing more
22 support for arts education. We are aligned around
23 the importance of arts in our schools and look
24 forward to answering some of the questions that you
25 have about that.

2 Councilmember Narcisse, it meant a lot to me
3 personally, to receive your immediate support for NYC
4 Reads, which I think is one of the most important
5 civil rights initiatives of our lifetime.
6 Councilmembers Schulman, Gennaro, and Salamanca, your
7 advocacy around advancing more supplies, training,
8 and education for our school communities as part of a
9 holistic approach to combat drug overdoses in the
10 city is already making a difference. The Health
11 Department will be strengthening its partnerships
12 with our schools this September.

13 Councilmembers Brooks-Powers and Dinowitz, we
14 thank you for convening meetings between our Deputy
15 Chancellor for Early Childhood Education and local
16 providers to deepen relationships, which improve
17 outcomes for all involved. Councilmember Brewer, we
18 were proud to work with your office to add an
19 additional 3K class at PS 185, The Locke School in
20 Manhattan to address a real need in the community.

21 I could go on but in the interest of time, I will
22 pause listing to productive engagements we have had
23 working together, but I hope it is obvious how
24 important engagement with our elected leaders is to
25 this Administration and to me, personally. I know

2 that we may not always agree on every issue. But in
3 the spirit of collegiality, we remain focused on our
4 collective work to better serve our school
5 communities.

6 So first and foremost, I want to share about a
7 major initiative we announced two weeks ago that
8 helped inform, and which will truly be life changing
9 for our students. As you know, I've been Chancellor
10 now for almost 17 months and every day, I'm struck
11 both by the brilliant promise of our children, and by
12 the need for us to do even more for them, and for our
13 educators. It's crystal clear to me, as I know it is
14 for many of you, where our intense focus needs to be:
15 We need to improve the way we teach our children to
16 read. The numbers tell the story.

17 Right now 51% of New York City elementary school
18 students and two thirds of students nationally, are
19 not even reading at grade level. This is the
20 educational crisis of our lifetime. And we're doing
21 something about it. This is why Mayor Adams and I
22 launched-- announced the launch of NYC Reads, a
23 landmark citywide campaign to declare literacy and
24 reading instruction as the core focus and overriding
25 priority of New York City public schools.

2 The science of reading tells us what works. And
3 that is a focus on phonemic awareness, phonics,
4 vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Teachers
5 tell us that they want clear guidance on what works,
6 backed by coaching and professional learning that's
7 tied to what they're doing in their classrooms, and
8 we're going to give it to them. NYC Reads will cover
9 all early childhood education programs, and
10 elementary schools over the next two years, with a
11 focus on a streamlined set of curricula that again,
12 are rooted in the science of reading.

13 Mayor Adams and I see this as a game changer in
14 the classroom, particularly in teaching all children
15 to be confident readers, which is an absolute
16 essential step on the way to achieving our mission of
17 ensuring that each student graduates on a pathway to
18 a rewarding career and long term economic security,
19 equipped to be a positive force for social change.

20 I hope we have the Council's support and making
21 this critical initiative a reality. Our work
22 together has been consistent and transformational
23 since the moment I became Chancellor. With your
24 support. We have made the city's first-ever
25 investment in the largest most comprehensive approach

2 to supporting students with dyslexia, screening all
3 students at risk and providing specialized
4 instruction. We made a significant investment in
5 expanding proven research-based programs, such as ASD
6 Nest, Horizon, and SEED to improve outcomes for
7 students on the autism spectrum and with other
8 special needs.

9 We announced our class size working group made up
10 of a diverse cross section of stakeholders. The goal
11 is to gather feedback related to our implementation
12 of the State's legislation, prescribing new class
13 size caps for all New York City K through 12 schools.
14 This work will require difficult decisions and trade
15 offs in the years ahead, as well as more funding, and
16 we believe it's critical that members of our school
17 communities are included in this process.

18 We strengthened the Fair Student Funding Formula.
19 We did that based on feedback from our communities,
20 to boost funding to schools that serve students in
21 temporary housing, and schools that serve a large
22 number of students with high needs. I want to thank
23 you for your hard work in partnership on this and I
24 hope you will join us in asking the state to support
25 updating its outdated state foundation aid formula,

2 which currently does not have a specific funding
3 weight for our students in temporary housing.

4 We implemented a historic investment to expand
5 early childhood education special education seats.
6 Our vision for early childhood education seats all
7 children, and we are particularly focused on children
8 with disabilities.

9 And we launched our new arts hub, a
10 groundbreaking approach to urban arts education in a
11 fantastic way to make sure we're connecting our
12 schools to the magic and splendor of our city's arts
13 scene.

14 These are all meaningful accomplishments for our
15 students, families, and schools, and we are grateful
16 for your partnership, in achieving each of them. And
17 all the initiatives we are discussing today are
18 focused on rebuilding that trust with our families,
19 while bringing families back to our schools. All
20 guided by our four pillars: reimagining the student
21 experience, scaling, sustaining and restoring what
22 works, prioritizing wellness, and engaging families
23 to be our true partners. I'm certain we will
24 continue to work together individually and
25 collectively to build on all these successes.

2 In the spirit of transparency, prior to this
3 hearing, we publicly shared our enrollment
4 projections for the upcoming year. Since 2017, we
5 lost over 120,000 students, including 70,000 in the
6 two years prior to my arrival. The current
7 enrollment projections are promising, reflecting a
8 decline of less than 1%, and an increase at the high
9 school level.

10 I want to say that again, the current enrollment
11 projections reflect a decline of less than 1% and an
12 increase at the high school level.

13 But we still have a lot of work to do to bring
14 more students and families back into our system.

15 I now want to turn to our fiscal year 2024
16 executive budget, which totals approximately \$37.5
17 billion. That includes \$30.6 billion in an operating
18 resources, and another \$6.9 billion for education
19 related pension and debt service funds. Our funding
20 is a combination of city, state, and federal
21 resources, with city tax levy money making up the
22 largest share.

23 FY 24 is projected to be at 51%. State funds at
24 38% and federal dollars at 10%. Acknowledging the
25 realities of the difference in enrollment from the

2 pre-pandemic days, which has declined, and short-term
3 stimulus funding, the mayor's budget includes a
4 reduction and fringe by over \$300 million in order to
5 meet the city wide PEG target.

6 As part of this budget, we also investing in some
7 key initiatives: continuing the efforts that this
8 Council has been leading on and recognizing the
9 importance of these positions, we're investing \$3.3
10 million to continue one time funding in FY 2024 for
11 the 25 shelter-based coordinators, \$5.5 million
12 dollars for the Wellness In The Schools Food Program,
13 which is a partnership to bring in local chefs to
14 every New York City public school kitchen to develop
15 healthy, scratch-based recipes and train up cooks on
16 the new recipes. This is in conjunction with 1.1
17 million for nutrition education work, and \$50 million
18 in the school construction authority's budget for the
19 cafeteria enhancement project, and \$2 million in FY
20 2024 and out for climate education as part of the
21 Mayor's climate action plan, including professional
22 learning for teachers, a school certification
23 program, and Climate Action Day.

24 Perhaps most importantly, the actions I've
25 described will allow us to meet the Mayor's

2 commitment to fiscal responsibility while continuing
3 to provide schools with 100% of their fair student
4 funding. It is imperative that we continue to meet
5 that benchmark for all our schools. In addition to
6 what was in our executive budget and our commitment
7 to fully fund fair student funding, and in spite of
8 the fiscal challenges, I'm very pleased that under
9 Mayor Adams his leadership and I work with OMB, I can
10 share that for next year, schools will be held
11 harmless for the initial budget allocations compared
12 to this current year, so no school will get a lower
13 initial allocation.

14 While schools may see increases or decreases in
15 specific allocations, like Title One, or FSF, we will
16 ensure that all in, schools will be held flat or see
17 an increase.

18 Schools will also continue to see additional
19 allocations throughout the year, just as they always
20 do.

21 I assure you, the team is working around the
22 clock to get school budgets out with this policy in
23 place no later than the end of this month. This is
24 in alignment with the typical timing of when school
25 budgets are released. And will provide principals

2 with enough time to plan for the upcoming school
3 year. When we release school budgets, we'll have
4 more details for you about this policy, and how we
5 execute it.

6 I want to thank the Council for your continued
7 advocacy for fair student funding, and for school
8 budgets overall in recent years, and assure you that
9 these remain a high priority. I'm excited to
10 continue to work together with all of you to support
11 our students and our schools, collaborating on the
12 issues that matter to all of us to help ensure that
13 we're giving our students a world class education.
14 We deeply appreciate and respect your leadership role
15 in this budget process, and are always eager to hear
16 from you about your priorities and hopes for our
17 school system. As I continue to say, we are partners
18 in his work.

19 Thank you and I look forward to answering any and
20 all of your questions.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chancellor.
22 Just to note we've also been joined by Bouncilmembers
23 Barron, Abreu, Ung, and Restler, as well as De La
24 Rosa. Okay.

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2 I want to jump right into it? Yep. It's good to
3 hear the schools will be held harmless for their
4 initial budget allocations. Could you tell us when
5 the individual school budget school budget info for
6 2023-24 school year would be available to the
7 Council?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, our team is
9 working very hard to finalize the initial school
10 budget allocations, planning to do it by the end of
11 the month, and hoping to do it by the end of this
12 week, which is on par with when it's been done in the
13 past, which is frankly particularly challenging to
14 meet that deadline this year, given the late state
15 budget and the fair student funding changes, but
16 we're on track to do that.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [TO DEPUTY CHANCELLOR
18 VADEHRA:] And as soon as we release it to our
19 schools, it will be simultaneously released to the
20 council?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, we will. Our
22 schools don't have their budgets either yet. So
23 that's what we're working towards so they can plan.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Do we have an idea
3 of how many schools are expected to receive a
4 reduction in FSF funding?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: All individual school
6 budget allocations we're really working to finalize
7 by the end of this week, as I said, and that's when
8 we'll have totals in terms of what schools are seeing
9 increases under particular funding streams or
10 decreases under particular funding streams.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: But thanks to this
13 new-- thanks to this announcement by the Chancellor,
14 it means that even if a school sees a decrease in
15 FSF, it will be held harmless overall for their
16 budget through some other funding stream.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So last year, DOE provided
18 additional funding to schools on top of the FSF for
19 academic recovery using stimulus money. What will we
20 be using this year?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Sorry. Yes. So as
22 was included in the preliminary budget, the Mayor has
23 already indicated that there will be \$160 million in
24 stimulus dollars that will go towards holding schools
25 harmless in some way. So that is already out there.

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2 Beyond that, we'll continue to work with our partners
3 at OMB to ensure there's dollars to hold all schools
4 harmless.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Was-- Was any of this--
6 Would this result in a reduction to school budgets in
7 the upcoming school year?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: No, this will mean--
9 This will mean consistent funding in terms of initial
10 year-to-year allocations in the upcoming school year.
11 And just to note one thing-- because you just said,
12 where-- sort of where will the funding come from?

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I do you want to note
15 that in addition to the \$160 million in hold
16 harmless, which was included in our executive budget,
17 we have also already indicated we'll be putting out
18 an additional roughly \$90 million in fair student
19 funding aligned with the new weights that were
20 recommended by the Fair Student Funding Working
21 Group. So that's additional dollars flowing to
22 schools through fair student funding for schools
23 serving students in temporary housing, and additional
24 dollars to schools with very high concentrations of
25 students in need through fair student funding. So

2 that will be an additional \$90 million flowing
3 through fair student funding. There will also be an
4 additional roughly \$200 million plus flowing through
5 in State Foundation Aid thanks to the increase we
6 received from the state making good finally on its
7 full commitment under the CFE lawsuit, \$160 million,
8 and then we'll be continuing to work with OMB. So
9 those are all increases.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Yeah, I just wanted
11 to get some-- some details there. Thank you.

12 Federal funding. So DOE has used a substantial
13 amount of short-term federal COVID funding to fund a
14 bunch of essential programs, including 3K, Summer
15 Rising, preschool, special ed, community schools,
16 academic recovery, and so on. You know, the concern,
17 not just a DOE, but across the board is that we might
18 be funding permanent programs with temporary money.
19 What programs are going to be impacted by the
20 reduction in federal funding?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes. Thank you. As
22 we've noted before, there are a number of our
23 programs and as you noted, there are a lot of our
24 centrally-driven programs that are really targeted at
25 some of our highest needs students, schools, and

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2 programs that are supported by federal funding. So
3 some of the larger ones are 3K. The 3K program was
4 built using federal dollars, Summer Rising, the
5 expansion of our Community Schools Program, some \$160
6 million of this hold harmless, that is going to
7 schools to keep their budgets maintained, arts
8 education, restorative justice. I can keep going
9 down the list that's on there, but there's a number
10 of these programs that are reliant either entirely or
11 in part on federal dollars-- on expiring federal
12 dollars.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So what's the plan to
14 sustain them with expiring federal money?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: We do not currently
16 have a plan. We look forward to continuing to work
17 with you, with the State, with the federal government
18 to ensure we can continue these high-priority
19 programs.

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: This is this is a major
21 challenge. I mean, there's a lot of great programs.
22 And even as we came on board, that had been built off
23 of these excess city stimulus dollars. The stimulus
24 dollars are going away. We're going to have to work
25 very closely together to try to figure this out.

2 As we sit here right now, I will not tell you we
3 have the answers to all of that. There's a lot of
4 money, and when it disappears, there's the notion
5 that every-- we still expect every one of these
6 programs to still be in play. Without those dollars,
7 it will be a challenge. And we will have to make
8 some tough decisions. And we should help to work and
9 do that together.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah. Creating permanent
11 programs with temporary money is short-sighted, I
12 mean, but here we are.

13 Do we know how much federal funding we're
14 expecting to get, or will-- sorry, will be remaining
15 at the end of the school year, be leftover?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: In terms of the one-
17 time stimulus dollars?

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So the one-time
20 stimulus dollars really need to be spent by the end
21 of this school year, because the actual federal
22 deadline for those dollars is September 2024, and we
23 need to have spent the money down by then. So at the
24 end of this next school year, we're assuming we will
25 have federal dollars left to spend in terms of the

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2 increase. We have our ongoing regular allocations of
3 Title One and IDA that are built in.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I want to talk about
5 Carter Cases quickly. How many parents filed for
6 alternate settings this school year?

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We're
8 expecting about 22,000 due process cases this year.
9 That's not a final number. We're still doing-- we're
10 still in the course of the year, but that's what
11 we're expecting for this school year.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's the average?

13 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I'm sorry,
14 average...?

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Like what's the average?
16 Is that high? Is that low?

17 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Well, that's--
18 that's the highest it's ever been. And that's about
19 quadruple what it was 10 years ago. So we've seen a
20 massive spike in these cases. And that is driven by--
21 - the due process cases, that's driven by cases filed
22 for tuition. That's also driven by cases filed for
23 services, and particularly for special education,
24 teachers, support services, set services, for
25 children who are in independent schools.

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And Chair Brannan, it's
3 important to note, right? I mean, this is one of the
4 big things as I came into office . You said this was
5 a spiraling cost on these on these Carter Cases.

6 Ultimately, the only way you begin to curtail
7 that is by offering up programming for parents that
8 meets the needs that they're looking for so they
9 don't have to leave and seek out private schools to
10 pay for this. And so we've been trying to lean in
11 with expansion of a number of our programs.
12 Christina Foti has been really leading that work. I
13 just think it's important to hear a little bit about
14 what we're doing.

15 CHIEF FOTI: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We've got to swear you in
17 for real.

18 COUNSEL: Do you affirm that your testimony will
19 be truthful to the best of your knowledge,
20 information and belief? And you will honestly and
21 faithfully answer councilmember questions?

22 CHIEF FOTI: I do.

23 COUNSEL: Thank you.

24 CHIEF FOTI: We are going to expand our programs
25 for students on the spectrum by 21 additional

2 programs for a total of 129 programs, with 3,495
3 seats total for our kids on the spectrum. And these
4 are all specialized programs that serve as
5 competitive options to the non-public schools that
6 parents are speaking-- are seeking.

7 We designed these programs to use the
8 methodologies that parents receive in private
9 programs and train our teachers in those
10 methodologies.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's great.

12 MR. TREYGER: Chair Brannan, if I may just add
13 very briefly. It's a very important question. And
14 we thank you.

15 At the end of the last Administration, there were
16 hundreds of children that we knew of-- that were with
17 kids with disabilities that that did not have a seat
18 in a preschool program. And I want to thank, of
19 course, the transport-- the deputy transporters team
20 here, the Council, Chair Joseph, many advocates who
21 prioritized the addition of hundreds of seats-- I
22 believe, and we can later testify, over 700 seats and
23 growing in just one year.

24

25

2 And if you don't provide-- first of all, we're
3 required by law to provide those seats, but if you
4 don't, those are the Carter Cases of tomorrow.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right.

6 MR. TREYGER: And so that is about servicing our
7 children, but also reining down costs at the tail
8 end. So I wanted to add that point. Thank you, sir.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah. We've done great
10 work with D75 seats, but I think by the end of next
11 year, everyone that wants a seat in district 20, you
12 can get a D75 seat, which is huge.

13 The 22-- Just the last thing on the Carter Cases
14 for me: The 22,000 number, how many of those are
15 pending litigation? Do we have an idea?

16 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: How many of
17 those are pending versus have already been resolved?

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I don't have
20 the update number, but I'll get you an updated
21 number.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Two last things for
23 me, and I want to give it a Chair Joseph.

24 There's a \$24.5 million preliminary budget PEG
25 entitled "vacancy reduction" for FY 24 and beyond.

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2 It's on top of the SSA vacancy reduction. Could you
3 give us an idea of the total number of positions that
4 would be eliminated?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, just give me one
6 minute.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Just to say: None of
9 those are school based positions. Those are all
10 central-based positions that just reflect slower-
11 than-expected hiring. And so none of those will
12 impact school budgets. And I'll give you the number
13 in one minute--

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: -- for school
16 staffing.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And if you could tell me
18 which divisions they're in, right?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Can you come back to
20 me?

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah. Yeah, sure. I
22 didn't know if... Yeah.

23 Okay, arts education, something super personally
24 important to me and a lot of my colleagues.

25 Unfortunately, when things get tough, the first

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2 things that often get cut, are the things that people
3 consider extra, and we're fighting to get people to
4 think of arts and music and culture is essential and
5 not extra.

6 How many schools-- can you tell us how many
7 schools have at least one certified arts teacher?

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Do we want-- I don't know if
9 we have got to swear you in our Deputy Chancellor for
10 for Teaching And Learning.

11 COUNSEL: Do you affirm of your testimony will be
12 truthful to the best of your knowledge, information
13 and belief, and you will honestly and faithfully
14 answer councilmember questions?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes.

16 COUNSEL: Thank you.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: And the question was
18 how many teachers...?

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How many-- How many
20 schools have at least one certified art teacher?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Right. So the
22 number of certified art teachers, I have to get back
23 to you with that number. But we do know that 100% of
24 our high schools have the mandated programs in place,
25 arts content in at least one area. At the middle

2 school level, two content areas in 34% of our schools
3 are meeting that. And at the elementary school
4 level, they have to provide programming in four
5 areas, and 54% of our schools are in compliance,
6 which is an increase of over 11%. While we are still
7 not at our target, and part of our concern there is
8 that this is a state mandate that is unfunded.

9 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, just-- just so you know,
10 in addition to that, there are a number of things
11 that we have done to try to plug that gap as well,
12 which are outside of even having the additional
13 teacher actually in the school. Deputy chancellor?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes, absolutely.
15 And part of that actually happens as a result of the
16 support of the Council. So the Council provided \$3
17 million this year. That allowed us to expand some of
18 our partnerships. And what we've been able to do
19 this year that is going to help us increase access
20 for students and for the adults, so for teachers and
21 principals: We're building an arts hub. And over I
22 think it's 27 principals, actually, that went through
23 the first cohort of fellows for arts training for
24 school leaders, so that leaders learn to better
25 integrate the arts into their system, this arts hub

2 will provide access to a range of students and
3 educators so that we don't have to keep having these
4 one-offs of programs, but rather folks have a spot
5 they can go to, to receive those types of services.

6 And then continued partnerships like we have
7 right now. The Paul Simon fellows, expanding our
8 relationship with Lincoln Center, who has offered us
9 an increase in supports for the summer, and other
10 opportunities like that that happen through funding.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's the current-- we're
12 trying to get it to be \$100 per pupil? What's the
13 current per-pupil funding for arts instruction?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: \$80 dollars
15 currently. That is a recommendation to schools for
16 FSF.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Would you guys support \$100
18 per pupil?

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We'd certainly look forward to
20 working with you around trying to develop that.
21 Absolutely. Listen, I want to be the Arts Champion
22 Chancellor. I really do. And there's a lot of work
23 that we-- we have to do.

24 I am a firm believer-- People ask me questions
25 all the time about kids coming out of the pandemic,

2 kids that are going through social emotional issues
3 and challenges, and arts speak to the soul. They
4 really do. And they need to be supported. The
5 challenge, Councilmembers should just know, for us
6 on-- on all these issues is that there is, at the end
7 of the day, still a finite pot of dollars that have
8 to be spread out across a wide range of issues, all
9 of which are important.

10 And the decisions around, you know where those
11 dollars go, always creates a push and pull around
12 those things that are important. They're all
13 important, and trying to find a balance.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I would add--

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You and I agree. I mean, I
16 think the thinking on this is that if it's mandated
17 that they have to spend 100 bucks only on arts
18 education, then when times get tough that money has
19 to be spent on arts no matter what, and they won't
20 put it elsewhere.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We should-- We should, I'm
22 more than willing to sit and further discuss that
23 with you for sure.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I would also just
25 add that going back to some of the things that we're

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2 using stimulus dollars to support, there is actually
3 an additional \$25 million in stimulus money that's
4 flowing to schools just for arts. That is true for
5 fiscal year 23, the current year, and we are
6 maintaining that next year, even as stimulus spending
7 goes down. And so that is a requirement.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. And you'll get back
9 to me with that vacancy info?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes. I'm working on
11 it now.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, no worries. Very
13 last question for me. Over 40% of New York City
14 public school families speak a language other than
15 English at home. Last year, the Council fought to
16 add \$4 million in the budget for immigrant family
17 communication. Unfortunately, the funding was not
18 baselined, and it's going to expire in June. But the
19 immigrant family communication was not funded this
20 year in the Mayor's Exec. What's the plan to support
21 these families?

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You've got to get sworn in.
23 There's another Deputy Chancellor.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Be street legal.

25 COUNSEL: Sorry. Give me your name please?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: Kenita Lloyd.

3 COUNSEL: Do you affirm that your testimony be
4 truthful to the best of your knowledge, information,
5 and belief, and you will honestly and faithfully
6 answer councilmember questions?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: Yes, I do.

8 COUNSEL: Thank you.

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: So just to-- just to
10 follow up with an update on what work is underway.
11 The work is underway. With the investment that we
12 received in the last fiscal year, the Office of
13 Language Access launched a three-pronged strategy in
14 order to reach our-- in order to reach our English
15 language learners. We launched a public awareness
16 campaign, some of which you may have already seen in
17 schools and on buses, and on radios. We have also
18 are working directly with community-based
19 organizations to reach hard-to-reach populations in
20 local communities. We communicate directly with
21 families in their language, with materials, our
22 resources, our team, and train the language access
23 coordinators at each school.

24 We also have enhanced language access
25 technologies at both the central and the school

2 level. So that includes interpretation equipment,
3 project management and communications tools so that
4 we can increase the pace at which we reach our
5 families who require translational interpretation
6 services.

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And it's not easy. We have
8 180 languages that are spoken, families in our
9 schools.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: It's amazing. But how--
11 how are we going to pay for it?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: So we do hope to
13 continue to work with you on the budget for that.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [chuckles] Okay, got it.
15 Okay, cool. Appreciate it. We're going to hand it
16 over to Chair Joseph. Chancellor and your team,
17 thank you very much.

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good to see you. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good afternoon, all.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Okay. I was going to
21 respond to the previous question.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Oh yeah.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So it's roughly 390,
24 and it's across central, and so we'll get you the
25 division by division.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you.

3 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: We will follow up the
4 390.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

6 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And chair,
7 just to follow up on your question about Carter
8 Cases, the due process cases, about 13,000 of those
9 cases this year have been resolved already. So we're
10 resolving more by the day.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Great. Just a quick follow
13 up on preschoolers with disabilities. How many
14 students are waiting for seats, currently on a
15 waitlist for seats right now?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I'm sorry. The
17 quick answer is that we'll-- I'm going to get that
18 for you in a couple of minutes.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, okay. Thank you. Well,
20 last year, we received \$125 million in academic
21 recovery funds, and we're allowed to use the
22 flexibility-- flexible. How much stimulus funding
23 will schools see this coming school year via academic
24 recovery funding? What is the plan to distribute it

2 equitably? Will schools continue to have flexibility
3 spending academic recovery funds?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So we are still
5 working with the new hold harmless for all schools.
6 We are still working to ensure all schools don't see
7 cuts at initial. It is likely that they will see
8 reductions in academic recovery funding. We will
9 hold the \$25 million for arts education in particular
10 that is required for arts. Beyond that they'll
11 likely see cuts in academic recovery funding.
12 However we are committing to make those cuts whole at
13 initial, as we noted. And that will be again-- that
14 will come from the \$160 million in hold harmless that
15 is stimulus dollars, the additional State aid,
16 additional FSF, and any other dollars we need to put
17 in to hold schools fully harmless.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you. How much
19 funding has been set aside for budget appeals, for
20 mid-year adjustments for the coming school year?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: At this point, we
22 don't have a specific pot set aside for budget
23 appeals. Given the various increases in school
24 budgets we expect to be going out, we really need to
25 wait and see once individual school budgets are out

2 what those needs look like. We'll continue to review
3 them as schools come in through the budget appeal
4 process. We're actually working to expedite a couple
5 of categories of appeals based in-- based on what
6 we've heard both from the fair student funding
7 working group and what we're seeing in the community,
8 so looking to expedite appeals related to special
9 education staffing, which as you know, was an item
10 that came up repeatedly in the fair student funding
11 working groups, looking to continue to expedite
12 appeals and dollars out the door to support schools
13 who are taking in asylum-seeking students. As we
14 know, that continues and we need to continue to
15 expedite the dollars there. And then we'll have the
16 regular budget appeals process as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, and you will
18 update and debrief the Chair and the Committee once
19 those numbers become available.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. The Mayor states
22 there we are in an emergency situation regarding
23 asylum-seeking New Yorkers. Will-- Will schools
24 continue to see dedicated supplemental funds for the
25 Project Open Arms? If so, how much? Do you have an

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2 estimate of how much money has been spent so far to
3 support our newly arrived students?

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We're going to swear in
5 Melissa Ramos, who's--

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're doing a great job,
7 Chancellor.

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I agree, she's an-- she has
9 been leading this work from day one. And, uh, so I
10 think they have to swear you in, Melissa.

11 COUNSEL: Yeah. Thank you. Do you affirm your
12 testimony will be truthful to the best of your
13 knowledge, information, and belief, and you will
14 honestly and faithfully answer councilmember
15 questions?

16 CHIEF RAMOS: Yes.

17 COUNSEL: Thank you.

18 CHIEF RAMOS: Good morning. So we are still
19 working on school budgets, as our Chief Operating
20 Officer, Emma, just pointed out. We also want to
21 note that in the new fair student funding formula,
22 there is priority given to students in temporary
23 housing, and the way that we really support our
24 asylum-seeking families, understanding that we cannot
25 ask them their status, we consider them students in

2 temporary housing. That's what they are. And so we
3 know that they will benefit from this new formula.

4 So as we continue to work through the budgets, we
5 will keep you posted, but just noting that the new
6 formula really does support this population of
7 students.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes. You know we will call
9 you in. What is the net increase to State aid to New
10 York City-- New York schools this year, and what is
11 your plan to ensure it reaches classrooms, and what
12 it is in compliance with-- is it in compliance with
13 the State's class size law?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So the net increase
15 year over year is roughly \$500 million. Of that \$500
16 million, a portion of that will actually be used to
17 support the new fair student funding waits. So those
18 are dollars that will support the students in
19 temporary housing and schools with high concentration
20 of students with need. So that, of course will flow
21 directly to schools.

22 A portion of the dollars will be used to support
23 our Special Ed programming. A portion of the dollars
24 will actually be used to support some of our rising
25 charter costs, and then an additional \$214 million

2 will go out to schools in their initial budget
3 allocations. I think that's partly what you're
4 referring to in terms of the class size law. Those
5 \$214 million that will go out to schools, that will
6 be an increase year over a year, in terms of that
7 funding stream, and those dollars are required to be
8 used in one of six ways that the State mandates, one
9 of which is class size reduction, although there are
10 others as well. And that will go into school
11 budgets, too.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. How much total
13 funding is needed for the new FSF weights? And where
14 did the funding come from? How much funding will the
15 new weights amount per student for both STH weight
16 and concentration of need?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: The-- We are
18 currently est-- of course, it's dependent on actual
19 students, but based on our projections, we're
20 currently estimating that those come to roughly \$90
21 million together across the system. Those will be
22 new dollars in the FSF formula. So those won't come
23 from elsewhere in the FSF formula, or elsewhere in
24 the school budgets. They're actually going to come
25 from our increase in state foundation aid. Now that

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2 we have that increase, we can say for certain what it
3 will be put towards.

4 Did you ask something else?

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I had asked about how much
6 is it going to be per student--

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yep.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: -- for both the STH weight
9 and concentration of need?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yep. So the
11 additional weight for STH is an additional weight of
12 0.12 on top of what you get for every student in the
13 system. So each of those students will get another
14 12% on top of that for each STH student, whether it's
15 one student, fifty students, every student counts.

16 The way the concentration weight works is it
17 actually looks school-wide at the set of schools with
18 the highest concentration of students who fall into a
19 set of categories. STH, students in foster care,
20 students with academic needs, sort of that set of
21 categories that as you know, since we're on the Fair
22 Student Working Group, that we-- for the Student
23 Funding Working Group that worked that together, and
24 the neediest 20% of schools will see those dollars in
25 a tiered way.

2 So it'll depend on the school and the need, but
3 it'll be the neediest 20% of schools in the city.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, I will come back
5 to you. But I'm Deputy Speaker Ayala?

6 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. I wasn't
7 expecting to go so quickly. But thank you so much.

8 I have a question regarding the bus services for
9 students in foster care. The DOE website states that
10 pre-K to 6th grade students in foster care are
11 entitled to school bus services, if a route is
12 already available, which makes the entitlement
13 meaningless.

14 For the past year, this Council has made clear
15 that the DOE needed to take action to guarantee bus
16 service or comparable door-to-door transportation for
17 students in foster care who need it for school
18 stability. Will the DOE commit to guaranteeing bus
19 service or door-to-door transportation for every
20 student in foster care who needs it? Will you change
21 the DOE website to reflect this guarantee? And we
22 understand that foster care agencies have not yet
23 been reimbursed for transportation costs they
24 incurred last year, and this school year when the DOE
25 did not provide bus service. So any changes to that?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes. Thank you.

3 Just-- Just to start at the end, there has been a lag
4 in payments to foster agencies. That is true, we are
5 now starting to make through them. There's been a
6 overly complicated process to do it. But we're now
7 in direct contact with them and making sure we're
8 verifying payments and getting those out the door as
9 of last week.

10 In terms of the first couple, we similarly very
11 much appreciate the advocacy of many here, as well as
12 many others working on behalf of these students. I
13 think we really share the goal that these are
14 students who are having their lives displaced for a
15 number of reasons, and that the least we can do is
16 ensure they can stay in their home school, and
17 support them in getting there. So we are both
18 looking at how can we look at alternative ways to--
19 You know, if there's not a route, there's not a route
20 -- but what are other ways we can ensure there's an
21 alternative route avail-- an alternative path
22 available within a certain amount of days, whether
23 that is via the foster agencies themselves providing
24 it and then getting reimbursed in a more timely way,
25 or whether there's rideshare options like we've

2 started to provide in other cases and putting out--
3 that out there as well.

4 So those are the couple of alternatives we're
5 working on to speed up that timeline.

6 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Does the-- does the DOE
7 work with DHS at any point to try to get kids placed
8 as close as possible to the school they're already
9 going to? Because I know I had a case a couple of
10 years ago where the mother was from the Bronx, but
11 was sent to Brooklyn. And so she had to get up extra
12 early in the morning so that she can come and drop
13 off the kids, which was also really hard on her, when
14 she had days off, and when she had other
15 appointments, because now she had to travel through,
16 you know, multiple boroughs in order to get her kids
17 to school. So they will late, you know, most of the
18 time, they were absent more than she would have
19 liked. And so we worked to get that family moved to
20 the Bronx. But I don't know that that's, you know,
21 always the case.

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah. I'm not sure that
23 that's always the case, either. But I would say
24 this, that--, Councilmember. You, or any other
25 member of Council, when you're aware of any

2 particular case like that, where a family is really
3 facing those kinds of extreme hardships. If you
4 bring that to our attention, we'll do everything, we
5 can rectify that.

6 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: So-- So, just that I
7 understand that the response correctly. So the DOE
8 is in favor of creating a route, and you're working
9 on a solution to this issue.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: We are absolutely in
11 favor of ensuring those kids are getting to school.
12 We prioritize bus routes, because that's our normal
13 way of getting all students to school. And what
14 we're working to do is figure out where there isn't a
15 route available, can we more quickly provide an
16 alternative route? Whether it's rideshare, or
17 agencies, but then reimbursing them more quickly?

18 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay, and then I have a
19 question regarding retrofitting schools for energy
20 efficiency and making more schools accessible. The
21 Council did call for an additional \$400 million in
22 capital to continue the effort of retrofitting
23 schools for energy efficiency. And I'm sure that all
24 of my colleagues will tell you that they get calls
25 from a multitude of schools that are like overheated

2 in the summer. During you know from now for me when
3 it gets really warm, there are spaces that
4 gymnasiums, the cafeterias that are overheated and
5 we're putting in funding-- the City Council is
6 putting in a lot of funding for air conditioning, but
7 we can't get air conditioning in because the wiring
8 is not at par. And the same goes with adapting, you
9 know, school buildings for accessibility. I have,
10 you know, again, I have a nephew that actually
11 transf-- he had to leave East Harlem. He has
12 cerebral palsy. He had to leave East Harlem every
13 morning extra early to go to the Lower East Side.
14 And we have kids in East Harlem that are coming from
15 Staten Island because their schools are not
16 accessible. So what do-- we'd love to know what
17 we're doing about that.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So on the
19 retrofitting schools for various energy purposes:
20 Yes, we are working hard to do that. And it is
21 particularly unfortunate when it ends up that we
22 can't do something like AC for all in those
23 particular schools. Our division of School
24 Facilities is working through that as much as we can
25 with-- with SCA, when there's more substantial--

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2 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: There was no funding added
3 to the executive budget.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: There was not funding
5 in the executive budget for that, no. This is work
6 that continues to be done where we have the funding.

7 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay. So is that still
8 being negotiated with the Administration? With-- Or
9 is that not happening this year?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: There is ongoing work
11 to do that, but there's no additional funding for it.

12 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Well, understood. But is
13 there ongoing conversation about getting the funding
14 with the Administration?

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No. Not particularly, no.
16 And I think that's where we also welcome all of you.
17 You-- you all are in a position of, you know,
18 establishing what your priorities are with the
19 Administration during this budget process. But as it
20 currently sits with us: No.

21 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I mean, we're always happy
22 to help. But we, you know, it-- we want-- we want to
23 back up an existing claim from, you know, the
24 Chancellors and the Commissioners. But when we need
25 to, you know, obviously, we will. And there was \$3.3

2 million allocated for the conversion for
3 accessibility, which obviously is not, you know, when
4 I was little I thought a million dollars was a lot of
5 money. I know now that it isn't. So \$3.3 I know
6 it's not sufficient to retrofit much.

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: One other
8 thing to add, Councilmember, there was \$750 million,
9 as you know, allocated in the current capital plan
10 for accessibility. That work is ongoing. Obviously,
11 it is unfinished, as you're talking about with your
12 family member, and others. So we are heading into
13 the last year of the capital plan, a new five-year
14 capital plan. Many of these upgrades that you're
15 talking about, Deputy Speaker, are going to require
16 capital funding. And that's the-- that's part of the
17 conversation we want to have with you and your
18 colleagues about priorities for the next capital
19 plan. In some cases, putting air conditioners in
20 auditoriums and in gyms is-- is not an extensive
21 project. In some cases it is extremely extensive,
22 and really requires a major capital infusion. So
23 that's, that's part of the challenge. But I do think
24 we have an opportunity to add on to the accessibility

2 work that we have already done, and to add on to the-
3 - the air conditioning work that we've done.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Yeah. Yeah, it should be
5 a priority that every school be accessible to all
6 children in their own communities. Children should
7 not have to wake up at four o'clock in the morning to
8 travel hours to get to school, because services are
9 not-- you know, critical services are not being
10 offered in their community.

11 And my final question is really regarding
12 staffing. I know every city agency has been
13 undergoing a staffing shortage. Is that something
14 that's impacting the DOE as well?

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It is, Deputy
16 Speaker, you know, but it's not-- not even. It's in
17 some of our offices more than others. So for
18 example, in our Finance Office, in our legal, Office
19 of General Counsel, we have very significant numbers
20 of vacancies. In other places, it's in, you know,
21 the low single digits.

22 So, you know, we are making some headway with
23 that. But it is a challenge and in some of our
24 critical functions.

2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Okay. Well,
3 while you're making decisions about hiring I-- I
4 would be remiss if I did not say this on the record,
5 my community would, you know, be really disappointed
6 if I didn't bring it up. But there we had a hiring
7 process in the South Bronx where we did hire a
8 superintendent that had-- has an open civil case on
9 sexual harassment cases in Newburg. And I was very
10 disappointed when I reached out to the DOE and was
11 told that that had come up, but it was not a
12 disqualifying factor.

13 I believe in due process, and I believe that
14 everybody is innocent until they're found, you know,
15 guilty otherwise. But I believe that we have to
16 allow that process to, you know, come to fruition
17 before we make these types of hiring decisions. And
18 so I just want to go on record saying that I'm very
19 disappointed, and I have received in the last month
20 alone, a slew of complaints about the same
21 individual, and I would love to have a conversation
22 with that but I want to go on record because I hope
23 that this does not happen again. And that, you know,
24 we are vetting the individuals that we're bringing
25 into our communities. I take sexual assault, sexual

2 harassment cases very seriously. And I believe women
3 when they say that something happened, something
4 happened. And I hope that the DOE, which is now
5 headed by a person that looks like us, takes that
6 just as seriously.

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And I look forward to
8 following up with you on that.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Brewer,
10 followed by Barron.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you. My question is
12 about some of the childcare, I would say, centers.
13 Now, obviously, these are the home based. They went
14 from-- In some cases, these are M/WBE programs. In
15 know there's one called Morningside Playcare that's
16 owed \$117,000. So I didn't know if that's unique, or
17 are there other similar nonprofits looking for the
18 same kind of funding? These are nonprofits that are
19 not been paid, apparently, for startup expenses.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Hi, Councilmember
21 Brewer. We can certainly look into any specific
22 inquiries that you have. So if that's Morningside
23 Family Childcare?

24 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: It is. Yep. So you don't
25 have that as an example of others? Okay. Next

2 question is just in terms of early childhood
3 instructional coaches. We're all concerned about
4 early childhood in general, because of the federal
5 funding. So I understand that there are people on
6 the posting list, so that hey are going to be
7 continuing. Could you just update me on the coaches
8 and the social workers and so on in early childhood,
9 and what is the status of their future?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you for the
11 question. We are still in conversation with our
12 labor partners on what the coaching model looks like
13 for this upcoming school year. And so there's
14 certainly decisions to be made and more to come.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: All right. And the
16 Creative Curriculum: Is that also part of that same
17 discussion?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: The Creative Curriculum
19 is the curriculum that our Birth-to-Five programming
20 is using across the city.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Correct. And are they
22 going to have any challenges in terms of funding, or
23 is that going to be fine?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: That is absolutely
25 fine. That is being funded.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. In terms of
3 absenteeism: Generally, there was an article in the
4 paper this week about high school students and the
5 huge absenteeism. So I want to know what's the
6 status of outreach? What's the funding for that? I
7 must admit it concerns me tremendously.

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes. Yeah. And the article
9 itself was a little outdated, as some of the numbers
10 that they were looking at were from the prior year.
11 But, Flavia, can they swear her in?

12 COUNSEL: Do you affirm that your testimony be
13 truthful to the best of your knowledge, information
14 and belief? And you will honestly and faithfully
15 answer councilmember questions?

16 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: I do.

17 COUNSEL: Thank you.

18 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: So to address what the
19 Chancellor was saying, the date on the article, which
20 you're probably referring to the 55% of seniors being
21 chronically absent, data from the prior school year.
22 What I can say the preliminary-- preliminarily, just
23 for the seniors alone, we have seen a 10% reduction
24 this year in chronic absenteeism. So we ended the

25

2 year last year with a little over 40% of our students
3 being chronically absent.

4 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: What's that number,
5 though? Percentages are fine. But what's the number
6 that you're--

7 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Oh, the total number of
8 students?

9 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Yes please.

10 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: I can have that for you in
11 in a minute, before this is over. But I also want to
12 contextualize this with like the National reality of
13 chronically absent students.

14 So all of the large districts across the entire
15 country--

16 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I'm not good on other
17 cities. I don't care about other cities.

18 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Okay.

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You don't care about them?

20 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I do not. I don't care--
21 you know how I am. I only care about Manhattan, but
22 I'll at least make it five boroughs. [LAUGHTER]

23 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: We'll give you the total
24 percentage. But what I want to make clear is that
25 the rate has done worse. So we ended up the year--

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I know it's down, but it
3 is still high.

4 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: --with 30%. We're-- with
5 40%, where in the 30s, and we can get you the exact
6 number that you're requesting, of how many total
7 students that is.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. And the other
9 question I have is on the arts. We all do care. But
10 is there some kind of a metric that you're trying to
11 meet? And are you measuring it with the arts?
12 Because it's nice to say they should be in the
13 curriculum, they should have our teachers, blah,
14 blah, blah, but if they don't measure it, or have
15 some-- Kate Levin, and I always say, used to have a
16 blue book, and it would measure. So what's your
17 measurement of the arts? In other words, what is it
18 that we're-- is there some measurement? You have to
19 measure literacy and math, but are you measuring
20 whether or not the arts are making a difference, if
21 they really have them, et cetera?

22 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Yes. Thank you. So,
23 there is a blueprint for the arts.

24 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

25

2 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: And schools absolutely
3 build to that blueprint. We're expanding beyond
4 that, to ens-- well, first to ensure that schools
5 have the appropriate training necessary to be able to
6 meet the standards that are within that blueprint,
7 but part of what we're doing with our arts director
8 is expanding beyond that to build in new
9 opportunities, like thinking about the arts and
10 career pathways, thinking about the arts with an SEL
11 lens, right?

12 And so other pieces that may not have been part
13 of the original blueprint that we're building into,
14 there's additional criteria in there.

15 As far as some of that information that you just
16 asked about in terms of the number of teachers, we do
17 have that kind of information. We are always looking
18 to see that we're increasing the number of arts
19 programs that are offered, because at each grade
20 band, what's-- what's required is the number of arts
21 programs, or arts programming, and depending on
22 whether you're in elementary, middle, or high. And
23 so number of teachers that we currently have, and it
24 has increased each year. Actually, in 2017 18, we

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2 had 2837 teachers now we have 2783. So it has gone
3 down from then, but it has gone up from last year.

4 So we have 2783 teachers total that are certified
5 arts teachers. The bulk of those are visual arts.
6 So over 1300 are visual arts and over 1000 are music
7 teachers.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

9 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: It also includes Dance and
10 Theatre.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. And the blueprint
12 is online? In other words, we can see-- is that
13 blueprint something that's publicly accessible?

14 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: It is.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then because
16 some-- You know, the arts-- I happen to know this.
17 You can have an art teacher but then you still need
18 the band, you still need the studio, you still need
19 all that.

20 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Right.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: So does the blueprint does
22 that kind of analysis?

23 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: The blueprint includes
24 that kind of criteria. The analysis comes from a

25

2 principal who's really looking for those kinds of--
3 of pieces.

4 And in spaces where we don't have a facility for
5 each school, our schools have been really good about
6 sharing those facilities. So a campus may share a
7 bandroom, for example.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I know. I can tell you
9 where they don't, but that's okay. Um, quickly:
10 Homeschooling. Is that something that's budgeted?
11 How do you budget homeschooling? Because there are
12 some challenges that I've heard about, meaning
13 somebody's not really homeschooling, there's abuse in
14 the-- you know, in the home, et cetera, et cetera.
15 Is there an allocation for homeschooling? I assume
16 there's more homeschooling because of COVID. So
17 who's, who's paying attention to that?

18 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: There-- there--
19 - Councilmember, you're right, there's an increase--

20 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I know I'm right.

21 [LAUGHTER] I know the answer before you give it to
22 me. go ahead.

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I'm sorry for
24 the gratuitous words. But we-- I'm not aware of an

2 allocation, but we'll have to check on what the--
3 what the funding mechanism is. It may be--

4 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: But there should be
5 oversight. I mean, somebody's supposed to be
6 overseeing homeschooling. So I assume that there's
7 an allocation of staff that is over-- overseeing
8 homeschooling.

9 I am getting people who are in social work
10 positions in nonprofits stating, you know, because
11 there isn't a lot of money for oversight, that
12 there's a lot of abuse. I mean, I wouldn't
13 necessarily be the, you know, there-- I won't get
14 into all the specifics, not appropriate, but it's not
15 being overseen correctly. So the question is, what's
16 the budget for homeschooling? And what's the
17 oversight of it, and who's paying attention?

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yep, got it. It's not
19 something that usually comes up. So we weren't
20 prepared for that.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I always have things that
22 don't usually come up.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right. Well, I
24 appreciate you raising it now. We'll certainly look
25 at that and get right back to you.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: All right. And that-- and
3 thank you. I am upset, as you know. I won't get--

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I know.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: We are going to go to
6 court to save Westside High School, and to make sure
7 that it doesn't get transferred to East Harlem. And
8 I want to thank Councilmember Ayala in particular.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Councilmember
10 Barron followed by Farías.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you very much.
12 Chancellor, my pastor, Reverend Daughtry, always
13 taught me that it's a poor frog who doesn't praise
14 his own pond. So I want to let you know you
15 mentioned 10 of my colleagues. You said thank you to
16 10 of my colleagues in their support of the work in
17 education. I'm going to tell my wife, Inez, that you
18 left out the Barrons because we're critical of your
19 buddy, the Mayor--

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Not at all.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: You left us out. But we
22 built three new \$88 million schools, none of them
23 have done that. We have science labs, computer labs,
24 parks that we renovated, and we fund after-school
25 programs for over 20 years.

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely. Absolutely.

3 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: No where on this do you
4 say thank you to the Barrons. Shame on you. And I'm
5 less forgiving than Inez. Wait until she sees you.

6 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Oh, I know I'm in trouble now.

7 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Secondly, I want to ask
8 you some serious questions that I want to get to if
9 you can jot them down, because time is of the
10 interest to the Chair when I'm talking other than
11 anybody else. I might get cut off at any moment. So
12 please jot this down:

13 One, what's happening with the money from the
14 campaign for fiscal equity? Inez and I have fought
15 hard for that in Albany. And when I left we finally
16 got them to do \$1.5, \$1.6 for the three years. Is
17 that getting to black and brown districts? Because
18 we fight hard for this sometime, and then it doesn't
19 get there.

20 Secondly, I'm concerned about colocation of
21 charter schools. I know the law says you have to do
22 that. But I'm concerned about the colocation of
23 charter schools in school buildings that were
24 designed for one school. So if you have three and
25 four charter schools in a school designed for one

2 school, and each one of them have administrative
3 offices, you're going to have less, you know, room
4 for class size.

5 And the graduation rate versus the college
6 preparedness and career preparedness rate. To me,
7 that's the one that we need a real increase on. That
8 has been very dismal in the prior administrations on
9 that. Career education: I think a lot of our youth
10 may benefit better for trade schools, if they knew
11 they were going to be mechanics and electricians and
12 construction. So I'm looking for more trade schools.

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: And then you know there's
15 a big concern about a black or African curriculum
16 material. And I don't like to say cultural affairs
17 or diversity studies, because we get lost. Black
18 folk get lost in diversity and cultural inclusion. I
19 don't want us to get lost.

20 I'm also concerned-- Uh, what's your capital
21 budget? What does the actual capital budget for--
22 you know, we have \$164 billion capital budget for the
23 state, I mean, for the city? And how much of that
24 capital budget is coming to you? Because I know you
25 need a lot of it.

2 And what-- what is the formula for getting the
3 community to control some of the schools, community
4 control over the schools? That has been a historic
5 challenge. As you know, I think it's 62 school
6 districts in the state, and only New York has your
7 buddy controlling us. Only New York has Mayoral
8 control. All of the other school districts: no. Why
9 is it that we have to have mayoral control. One
10 mayor, Cop Adams controlling an entire school system
11 is just unconscionable and unacceptable to me. We
12 need to end mayoral control.

13 And then finally, what is your position on-- I
14 told you one of my favorite topics is black
15 linguistics. How can we focus on how black children
16 acquire language? You know, that whole Ebonics
17 program was taken totally out of proportion. Some
18 people don't even know what it was really about. But
19 how we require language and stop telling our children
20 that they speak bad English, when they are influenced
21 by African language systems, because of what they
22 call linguistic retention of some of the African
23 language systems.

24 So I think those are some critical things. I
25 think I gave you more than enough to deal with.

2 And finally, one more thing: What is your
3 contract budget? Your contract budget? Your budget
4 for contracting? I know the city has a huge
5 contracting budget and have your \$30 billion, how
6 much of it goes for contracts?

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Because I find out when
9 things have to be cut (and I don't believe that you
10 should be cut by \$200 or \$300 million and try to
11 justify that as friends and all of this stuff), you
12 should have an increase. There should be an increase
13 in the education budget, not a cut. That's for us.
14 I don't think any one of these Councilmembers should
15 vote for a budget that has any cuts to education,
16 because it's that important to us, as well as our
17 libraries and cultural institutions. Thank you.

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No. I appreciate it. And
19 where do I begin?

20 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: With Inez.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: My deepest apologies, my
22 sister, Inez. I have traveled the district, moved
23 around the district with you both. And that was--
24 that was that was just an oversight. And please
25 accept my apologies for it. I have the greatest

2 respect for you both, and your leadership, and what
3 you have accomplished over the many, many years, and
4 what we can in fact continue to do together, and I
5 want you to know that.

6 Our Black Studies curriculum is something that we
7 have been hard at work on. We should get a sit down
8 with you and just update you on where-- on where we
9 are with that, because we really could use your--
10 your insight as well. But we're certainly looking to
11 make some announcements as we come into the beginning
12 of the next school year in preparation for that.

13 Career education is something that we've made a
14 priority for us, for this Administration, and that's
15 what our career pathways work is all about: Trying
16 to provide real opportunities for young people to
17 have an opportunity to understand at the end of this
18 K-12 experience and 3K through 12 experience, what
19 are the opportunities that are there for them? What
20 are the kinds of jobs that they-- that they could,
21 you know, they could avail for themselves.

22 So our modern youth apprenticeship program and,
23 and other programs that we have put in place, and
24 we're going to continue to build and grow those. Our
25 theme for this Administration is what we call Bright

2 Stars and Bold Futures. And the bold futures is all
3 about that work at the end of the day, that kids are
4 going to be able to have the kinds of skills that
5 they need to be able to take their rightful place in
6 this 21st Century economy, no matter what those
7 positions might be.

8 The co-locations with charter schools is always
9 is always a challenge. That is why-- But here's the
10 conundrum: When a charter school gets approved, we--
11 we have the obligation to find space. Or otherwise,
12 we have to fund the space separately. And those
13 dollars, then are dollars that could have been used
14 otherwise. So that's why we work really hard to try
15 to get a charter school inside of an existing school
16 that has the space. Because if you don't, they get
17 private space. And then we're already spending-- how
18 many-- how much-- We are spending right now \$200
19 million a year, and that number is growing, for
20 charter schools, in spaces that are not in our
21 schools. If we could find space for them in all of
22 our schools, that's \$200 million that we could use to
23 fund a lot of other programs for our kids. So that's
24 just kind of the conundrum that we find ourselves in.

2 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: But it is a conundrum
3 because also having them there is detrimental to the
4 development of the school itself, because of the
5 class size that's going to be overcrowded in many of
6 those schools. Well, that's something we're going to
7 have to address. You know, the class size issue is
8 going to be a challenge. For the next two years, we
9 don't see a significant challenge or meeting the
10 mandate for class size. It's by year three on, is
11 when we're going to start to have some-- some more
12 challenging conversations in ways to meet-- we're
13 trying to look at those issues right now to be
14 prepared for down the line. So thank goodness, the
15 next couple of years, we're in pretty good shape.
16 But by year three is where some of the challenges are
17 going to come, and were some of the tough decisions
18 are going to have to be made.

19 Listen, you talk about linguistics, black
20 linguistics. You know, my focus right now,
21 Councilmember, with all due respect, is I'm trying to
22 make sure that the kids can-- can read right now.
23 And that they're not even doing that. 64% of black
24 kids in New York City are not even reading on grade
25 level.

2 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: And you know why? It has
3 a lot to do with you not studying-- with the
4 education system, not studying black linguistics.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, we should talk about,
6 how we connect that.

7 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: We really should, because
8 it's connected to reading.

9 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Okay.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: And I can show you some
11 programs where they use black linguistics as a basis
12 for getting them to read better and Standard English.
13 And it was tremendously successful. When that's
14 ignored, you have a problem with reading.

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I will follow that.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: If I may. Sorry,
17 Councilmember Barron, I would love to set up some
18 time actually, to connect with you. We've been
19 looking at some technology that helps promote student
20 acquisition of language and help promote reading.
21 And part of what we wanted to make sure, with each of
22 the folks that we met with was does-- is this
23 linguistically and culturally responsive? Will it
24 allow for a variation in dialect, accent, and the

2 ways that we approach language based on the diversity
3 of New York City.

4 And so I would love to connect with you a little
5 bit more to look into that.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: I just would like for you
7 to also look into African-centric linguistic systems,
8 and see how that influenced why our children read the
9 way they read, speak the way they speak, talk the way
10 they talk. Because without that study, then no
11 matter what technology you have, you're not going to
12 get at the heart of the problem.

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We want to follow up with you.
14 We will sit down and delve a little bit more deeply
15 into that.

16 If I could just speak a little bit about the
17 campaign for fiscal equity and-- as well as the-- the
18 capital budget and the contract budget?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yep. Thank you for
20 your leadership and advocacy on the campaign for
21 fiscal equity as well as others obviously a really
22 critical component of supporting our students in
23 schools. We'll see an eq-- we are-- the State is
24 making good on its promise. So this year, we're
25 seeing the last year of that money come through our

2 budget. The state budget that was finalized a couple
3 of weeks ago included an extra \$500 million for New
4 York City schools over last year. And yes, a good
5 chunk of that money is flowing out through a couple
6 of formulas that take need into account in some
7 meaningful ways, which will ensure it's targeted at
8 the communities with high rates of economic need,
9 high rates of students in temporary housing, both
10 through our fair student funding formula and because
11 the state itself requires some of the money flowing
12 that way.

13 Contracts: Our contract budget fluctuates from
14 year to year, but it's somewhere between \$6 and \$7
15 billion for last year. Just as a reminder, though,
16 of what that includes: That includes all of our
17 school busing, which is our largest contracted cost,
18 isn't included in there. That includes our-- all of
19 our early childhood CBO providers. So all of that
20 money going to CBOs for zero to five, that is also--
21 those are also contracted costs. Not the ones in our
22 district schools, but the CBO providers we were
23 speaking of earlier. That includes funding for the
24 custodial staff in our schools, which is our third
25 largest contracted cost. Those-- The staff

2 themselves work through an external nonprofit. And
3 so it's \$6 to \$7 billion, but a lot of that is funded
4 in some of those sort of core operating work.

5 And then capital plan: The-- Our real capital
6 work is done through the School Construction
7 Authority, which works on a five-year plan. Their
8 current plan, which is rounding up next year, is a
9 bit under \$20 billion, and they're currently in the
10 process of developing (and we're working closely with
11 them on this) developing their next five year capital
12 plan.

13 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: In the interest of time,
14 we'll talk. We definitely have to talk.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Great.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Councilmember
17 Barron. I just want to follow up real quick on
18 something Councilmember Brewer said about
19 absenteeism. Has it ever crossed maybe we can work
20 with attendance teachers and social workers to
21 partner up in doing the outreach, because sometimes
22 social work is needed in that space to find out what
23 is preventing that child from coming to school. So I
24 think attendance teachers and social workers--

25 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's a great idea.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: --you should partner up
3 together to bring in the balance in helping the
4 students and trying to find out what's stopping them
5 from coming to school.

6 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Great idea. Absolutely.
7 Let's follow up on that for sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Deputy Chancellor, I have a
9 quick question for you: We continue to hear from
10 early childhood providers (that's just to piggyback
11 off of Councilmember Brewer's question), education
12 providers about unacceptable payment delays, or non-
13 payments. How many invoices have been received, but
14 are still pending payment? What is the total dollar
15 figure for those pending invoices?

16 These providers are holding up our early
17 childhood sector, but barely hanging on themselves.
18 What can you commit to today that will ensure these
19 problems do not continue in the next fiscal year.
20 We've had two hearings on this topic already.

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you, Chair
22 Joseph, and good to see you.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Same here.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So just to give some
25 overview, thus far for the fiscal year, we've paid

2 over a billion dollars to our early childhood
3 providers, and that's nearly-- almost 8000 invoices
4 that have been submitted and either paid or resolved.

5 There are still another almost 6500 invoices
6 expected for the remainder of this fiscal year.
7 Those are both back invoices and those that are
8 expected for both May and June, and another 2000 that
9 are pending right now being processed and reviewed
10 and paid.

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Let me just say, Chair Joseph,
12 as well, because we won't resolve this at this
13 moment: I want to reemphasize this. I've said it
14 publicly before. This system of early childhood and
15 how providers get paid was a broken system that we
16 inherited. It's not one that we created. And we
17 have been trying to fix the plane while we're flying
18 it. That's-- that's-- that is the reality of what we
19 are dealing with. But we have a number of things
20 that are on the table now that I want to desperately,
21 and the Mayor desperately wants to put this as a
22 full-fledged issue about in our rearview mirror.
23 Really. And-- and we-- and I think, you know, one of
24 the things we're actually looking at is how to

2 potentially eliminate the invoicing-- invoicing as a
3 standard in the first place.

4 You know, this-- Our schools within New York
5 City public schools that have early childhood, they
6 don't have to invoice. They're part of the broader
7 system. But all of our mom-and-pop operators around
8 the city, we make them go through this arduous
9 process of invoicing every month and checking them
10 almost as though we don't trust them, right? And so
11 there's a-- This is a-- But again, this was system
12 that was set up. We-- I-- We are still working very
13 hard to try to figure out how to get out in front of
14 this in a way that we don't have to continue to have
15 hearings dealing with this as an issue.

16 But we'll certainly sit down and meet with you
17 about this, because it's going to require a more
18 fundamental change, and not just kind of playing
19 catchup with invoices. We have to transform the
20 whole way in which we're actually doing this process.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: In the last hearing. I did
22 suggest maybe paying providers upfront. Versus that
23 I had already said that. Is it-- As we hold schools
24 harmless, do we plan to hold providers harmless like

2 we did last year? Is that something we're talking
3 about? Are we looking at it?

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: It's something we're looking
5 at. We've not resolved that just yet, to be able to
6 make a commitment to that today. But-- But it is an
7 ongoing conversation when we're trying to get closer
8 to.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I will come
10 back.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Councilmember Fariás
12 followed by Louis.

13 Okay, Councilmember Lewis. We've been joined by
14 Councilmember Narcisse.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chairs. I have--
16 - Hi Chancellor. Good to see you. Three quick
17 questions.

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Hi. Mm-hmm.

19 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: One is on community
20 schools, the enhancements for school kitchens, and
21 the last one on social emotional learning.

22 I'll start with the school kitchen and cafeteria
23 enhancement. So I'm reading here there's 130
24 cafeterias that were redesigned. So I would love to
25

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2 have that list if you could share it with the
3 committee.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Okay.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: But the \$200 commitment for
6 capital funds for FY 24 Executive Budget, I wanted to
7 know if the \$200 million is just for FY 24, or does
8 that include out yours? And in addition to that, how
9 many schools would the \$200 million cover? That's--
10 That's the school and cafeteria enhancement question?

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Okay.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Regarding social emotional
13 learning, I wanted to know how many social workers
14 are currently assigned for social emotional learning,
15 and currently is that only for D79 schools, or will
16 it be expanded in FY 24?

17 And the last question is regarding community
18 schools, which are often-- I know that you often
19 hear about. But I wanted to know what's causing the
20 delays in community schools being billed for their
21 contracts? And what is your administration seeking
22 to do before FY 24?

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Mm-hmm.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So on the cafeteria
25 enhancements question, I'll actually need to check on

2 the \$200. But what I can tell you is, as included
3 the Executive Budget, there's an additional \$50
4 million and that's all for FY 24. And we expect that
5 to go to 80-plus kitchens, cafeterias to be able to
6 enhance those. And we look at high schools and
7 middle schools. We look at enrollment. We look at
8 places where we want to drive up participation in our
9 lunch program. We look at areas of economic need, as
10 we sort of sort through where those go, but we're
11 looking at 80-plus next year for \$50 million.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: It would be good to know
13 what those indicators are that you're mentioning now,
14 and the locations that you all are identifying for
15 that. But if you could also include the 130
16 cafeterias that are-- that already have been
17 redesigned?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes. Absolutely we
19 can do that. And those are basically the indicators,
20 but we can write them up along with the schools we're
21 looking to work on.

22 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Thank you.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yeah.

24 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Social emotional learning
25 and the community schools?

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I think we have to swear in
3 one other member of our team, Mark Rampersant.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: No problem.

5 COUNSEL: Do you-- can you say your name please,
6 sir?

7 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Mark Rampersant.

8 COUNSEL: Do you affirm your testimony we
9 truthful to the best of your knowledge, information
10 and belief, and you will honestly and faithfully
11 answer a councilmember questions?

12 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: I do.

13 COUNSEL: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Swear him in twice.

15 [LAUGHTER]

16 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: This is what friendship is
17 like. Okay. [LAUGHTER]

18 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Hi.

19 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: How are you? I'm here to
20 answer your question about guidance counselors and
21 social workers--

22 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIDS: Yes.

23 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: --and any specific questions.
24 And those numbers read as follows. For guidance
25 counselor, we are currently at 3191. So that's up

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2 from 3082. For social workers were at 1951, and that
3 is up from 1890, for a total of 5142 across the
4 system, and that that runs the full gamut of our
5 school.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: And that's not just D79?
7 That's all schools?

8 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: That's all schools. Yes,
9 ma'am.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Thank you.

11 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Thank you.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: And the last question is in
13 regards to billing, the outstanding billing for
14 community schools, and what is DOE doing to address
15 that?

16 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Thank you. So we have
17 made great progress this year, both in contracts that
18 were inspired and in need of extension. But also our
19 focus has been of getting viable contracts with the
20 new community schools that were created this year.
21 So as those contracts are registered, my team
22 immediately expedites processing the payment. And
23 we're working closely with our DCP department. But
24 if you have a specific question on any provider, I'm

25

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2 happy to reconnect with you and talk through--
3 through each of them.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: So the Council allocated
5 some funds towards this in FY 22 and FY 23. So
6 there's still some schools outstanding, that are
7 still pending contracts. I guess the DOE still
8 hasn't identified.

9 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Yeah. Because the Council
10 provided funding for the-- for the COVID and some of
11 the other community schools where we have seen a
12 reduction originally to levels set. So those were a
13 lot of the ones that we recently had to go because
14 they were expired. So many of those are already
15 registered, and we're working on the process of
16 closing payment.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: All right. It will be good
18 to get an update on who's expired and what's getting
19 updated. Thank you so much.

20 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Absolutely. Thank you.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We'll provide that, yup.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Sanchez,
23 followed by Lee.

24 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much,
25 Chairs. And good afternoon. I am the little one

2 here in the back with the my own mic and everything.
3 It's the most popular hearing of the season.

4 I want to thank you. Thank you for answering all
5 of our questions. Mine today focus on Summer Rising.
6 And I first want to just put the elephant right in
7 the center of the room, which is: I've had
8 constituents calling our office and I just want to
9 make sure to ask this on the-- on the record. There
10 have been concerns that because the city is welcoming
11 migrants, and we're doing all that we can to welcome
12 them into our cities that there is space that should
13 have been or would have been dedicated to Summer
14 Rising programming this summer that isn't going to
15 be. Can you-- Can you just address that concern, and
16 help us understand how we should be talking to our
17 parents about this?

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah. You know, that's an
19 interesting one for me, right? Because, you know,
20 from last year, when we did this Summer Rising
21 program, it was the largest summer program that we've
22 that we've had in our history in New York City. And
23 I heard from so many people around the city,
24 including members of this body, who said, "Do
25 whatever you can to try to prioritize our kids in

2 temporary housing, they face some of the greatest
3 challenges." We built that into our formula this
4 year. It wasn't--

5 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: And I appreciate that.

6 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, and-- But-- And it wasn't
7 necessarily with an eye towards the asylum-seeking
8 families. It was just traditional. I mean, you
9 start with kids who are in who are in temporary
10 housing. Our asylum-seeking families are part of
11 that pool of students as well. You know, we don't--
12 we don't ask them, "Are you an asylum seeking
13 family?" They're just students in temporary housing.
14 And so when we-- when we try to prioritize more
15 numbers for those kids, it will naturally include
16 some of the asylum seeking families as well. But I
17 certainly understand some of our other families, who
18 then may not get a seat saying, "Hey, what about me?"

19 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: So just-- just to
20 clarify: The concern is that we're housing migrants
21 where the-- where these children would have been
22 receiving the programming, so that we're going to
23 have beds set up in temporary housing facilities in
24 the schools.

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Oh. No, no, no. That's not--
3 That's not true at all. No. I will say there was a
4 larger issue we have been hearing about. But no,
5 we're not-- we're not housing students in places
6 where we will be having our Summer Rising programs.
7 In fact, right now, we're not housing, any of the
8 migrant families in our schools. We have one school
9 in Staten Island-- rather in Coney Island. But the
10 City, you know, took that down. We had had a few
11 other schools that have had some cots in it, but
12 there were never any people placed. And even those
13 cuts have been removed.

14 So none of our school facilities that we're going
15 to be having our Summer Rising programs will be
16 housing any of those families.

17 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay. Thank you. Thank
18 you so much, Chancellor. And just to talk a little
19 bit about that algorithm in the few seconds that I
20 have left, how did the housing lottery exactly
21 prioritize these special populations, students with
22 IEPs, ELLs, living in temporary housing, and Title
23 1's? How many of these students were given
24 placement, versus students without those
25 designations? And we're certain districts-- well,

2 certain districts were given fewer Summer Rising
3 seats this year than last year. How are those
4 decisions made?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yep. So there were a
6 set of different student groups that were prioritized
7 through the process. Just stepping back for a
8 moment, one of the things we did this year was
9 actually to move away from the first-come/first-serve
10 process we had last year, that meant the sooner you
11 signed up, you got to spot. If you took a day or two
12 you didn't.

13 So we had one unified process that we thought was
14 both more fair and equitable, which also allowed us
15 to cleanly provide a priority for these particular
16 groups of students we wanted to support.

17 The way it-- The way it actually works is a
18 little bit different for different groups of
19 students. So for students in temporary housing, and
20 for students affiliated with a DYCD CBO. So if
21 you're in an after school program during the year
22 with the with a DYCD CBO, you also got a priority.
23 For students like that, they applied through the
24 regular process, but just got a priority on what they
25 put down.

2 For students with academic needs, students who
3 are mandated for summer programming academically,
4 that process works a little bit differently, because
5 we learn that later in the year, so we're holding
6 seats for those students, but they didn't come
7 through the regular process. So it varies by
8 student.

9 In total, we had roughly 140,000 applications in
10 total for roughly 110,000 seats. So just stepping
11 back for a moment, the basic challenge is that demand
12 outstripped supply pretty dramatically. And so
13 there's different ways that could have looked, but we
14 just didn't have enough seats in the program for the
15 number of kids and families that really wanted this
16 program, despite the fact that it is the largest
17 summer program we've had, and the largest in the
18 country. Of those-- Of the students who apply
19 roughly 16,000 students in temporary housing received
20 a placement. Roughly-- Another roughly 1000 students
21 in foster care, another roughly 3000 Students with 12
22 month IEPs, and roughly 29,000 students who were in
23 DYCD CBOs during the year. And so those are those
24 set of priorities and how they played out across the-
25 - across the pool.

2 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Got it. And how and when
3 do you plan to inform those 30,000 families on the
4 waitlist?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Great question. So
6 all families learned the-- I lost track of time-- the
7 week before last whether they received a placement or
8 not.

9 And roughly 95,000 families learned at that time
10 that they received a placement, and the others
11 learned they did not. Basically what's happening now
12 is some of those extra seats are being held for
13 students who are required to go to summer programming
14 for academic reasons. But in the meantime, there's
15 also a few seats that basically were not filled. And
16 then there are families who might say, "I actually
17 don't want this seat."

18 So basically, what we're doing is we're taking
19 those set of seats as they come in, we are working
20 with DYCD to figure out sort of the best possible
21 process to ensure families are made aware of those
22 seats locally. We're going to make that public in
23 June where those seats are, and what the process is
24 for families to come in and apply for them.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, thank you so much.
3 Thank you for those clarifications. Very helpful.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Just a quick
5 follow up on that question: For the record, how many
6 students are still with our seats after still
7 applying?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So we had roughly
9 139,000 and we placed 94,000. So that delta of 43 is
10 roughly what was the students who applied and did not
11 receive a placement.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And if there's a plan to add
13 seats to meet demands?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: There is not at this
15 point a plan to add seats to meet demand. As I said,
16 where families don't take the seats, or where we had
17 a few extras, we will find a way to work with DYCD
18 for those seats to be filled. But there's not
19 currently a plan to expand. And just to tie this
20 back to a couple of the other things we've talked
21 about earlier, and as a reminder: This is our
22 largest summer program, as it was last year. We're
23 able to do that in part because of these stimulus
24 dollars that are expiring. And so we're already
25 allocating additional stimulus dollars for this that

2 we don't expect to have next year. And that is one
3 of our constraints in terms of expanding. Also
4 working with our CBO partners and making sure we're
5 giving them students that they can support.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you foresee any staff
7 challenging at the schools and the CBO level for
8 Summer Rising?

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: We do not at this
10 point foresee any staff challenges, but we're
11 continuing to work through that process right now.
12 We work very closely with DYCD on the CBO side
13 upfront to make sure that's done. And then we're
14 working through the school staffing side now.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We had an issue last year
16 around transportation. How will transportation needs
17 to be met for students in service of-- after 4 p.m.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: As with last year,
19 we'll be continuing the ride share option for
20 students who are mandated, and who stay-- stay later
21 stay till six. And that same rideshare option will
22 be available this year. And hopefully it will
23 actually be a bit better and a bit smoother. Last
24 year, we were doing that for the very first time. We
25 learned a lot through the process. This year. We've

2 been doing it through the year and we hope for this
3 year it sorted the communication out to families, the
4 whole process will work better for both families and
5 kids.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Lee followed
8 by Schulman.

9 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Hi. Thank you so much
10 Chancellor and everyone from DOE. Thanks for being
11 here today. So as Chair of the Mental Health
12 Committee, of course, I'm going to ask questions more
13 on the mental health spectrum and side of things.

14 So I know that on the Council side, just a few
15 questions, because when it comes to the budget
16 around-- I know there was \$5 million that we were
17 requesting, if you all could baseline about the
18 mental health continuum and \$28 million to expand the
19 school-based mental health clinics to an additional
20 100 school sites. And actually, Councilmember Louis
21 asked my question also about the social workers and
22 the guidance counselors at the 100 schools.

23 And so just wanted to know where things were at
24 in terms of, you know, the prioritizing. Because
25 obviously, we've seen, you know, we're still coming

2 out of COVID, and there's a lot that we're seeing
3 with our students that are much needed around the
4 mental health continuum. So I'm just wanting to know
5 if you could speak a little bit about the \$5 million
6 for that piece, as well as the \$28 million to expand
7 the school-based mental health clinics. And then I
8 did have a clarifying question about the social
9 workers versus guidance counselors, but I'll ask that
10 after.

11 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: I can jump in and begin
12 talking about the mental health continuum. I think
13 is important to know that the funding for that goes
14 to three different agencies. So when you're talking
15 about \$5 million, a portion of that goes to the
16 Department of Health to-- to pay for the clinicians
17 that are supporting that work. And then a portion of
18 that goes also to Health + Hospitals. So we have
19 like three different agencies that are supporting the
20 work. And then a subset of that comes to DOE. So
21 the last couple of years that work was funded through
22 City Council. Right now we're, you know, looking for
23 your support not just for the DOE but for our two
24 partner agencies to be able to continue to-- to fund
25 that work. We're ready. And as our team has

2 mentioned, we're looking at all of the things that we
3 have that are critical work that are funded through--
4 through stimulus funding or through City Council,
5 unfortunately, that we don't have tax levy dollars.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, and then for the social
7 workers that are in the schools. Because when I
8 asked the commissioner of DOHMH, he was said that was
9 pretty much under DOE, because it was about the
10 social work-- like specifically the ones that are in
11 the schools. Because I was wondering also if there
12 was a partnership there. So can you actually clarify
13 which-- which of the mental health pieces that DOE
14 fully owns, I guess, if you will, in terms of the
15 budget piece of it?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So the social workers
17 are in our budget. Yes. That's right. As-- As
18 Flavia mentioned, the school-based-- the mental
19 health continuum is split among various budgets, as
20 is the school-based ment-- not various, but as she
21 said, and so our school based mental health centers.
22 So the 211 -- that number is right-- school based
23 mental health centers we have now, we work with
24 DOHMH, it's actually under our Office of School
25 Health, which is split between-- reports dually to

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2 the two agencies for the for the school based mental
3 health centers.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, interesting. I'll have
5 to follow up with you more on the afterwards. And
6 then also for the 1,951 social workers that are now
7 here, is that enough to-- because I know that we have
8 a bunch of-- we have about 1800 public schools. And
9 how are we on track to doing the, you know, making
10 sure that we have one-- is it one mental health
11 professional for every 250 students are the one
12 social worker? Because I think there is a difference
13 in terms of roles and responsibilities with social
14 workers versus guidance counselors, and I just wanted
15 to clarify that piece also.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: That one is not me,
17 Flavia.

18 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: I can-- I can start. And
19 then, Mark, I don't know if you want to add. But you
20 are correct to say that the goal has always been to
21 ensure that we have at least one dedicated mental
22 health professional and support. And that includes
23 both the social worker as well as the staff on the
24 clinic.

25

2 And just to be clear, many of these clinics that
3 Emma is describing include both social workers and
4 psychologists. So they do have mental health
5 professionals embedded within their-- within their
6 mental health office. And Mark can maybe tell us
7 what the current ratio is for, for schools that
8 you're describing in comparison to the 250.

9 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. And if you could also
10 talk about any hiring challenges you're having,
11 because I know that across the mental health, you
12 know, field, there have been hiring challenges. And
13 so if you could speak to a little bit of that as
14 well.

15 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Hiring challenges with
16 social workers?

17 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yes.

18 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: That hasn't been
19 historically the case with DOE. I know that as this
20 administration began, we were able to hire 500 new
21 social workers. So I know he can share, but we have
22 seen an-- an increase, right? That doesn't mean that
23 we're not always welcoming and look forward for
24 opportunities to make those services and those

2 supports more robust, but we need to look at all of
3 the ones that exist. Mark?

4 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Justin, do I need to be sworn
5 in again? Or am I good? [LAUGHTER]

6 Alright, so the-- so the work of the work of the
7 social worker is one that we are constantly looking
8 at to enhance for our young people. And I think
9 Flavia said it best: Every one of our young people
10 has direct access to a school-based health clinic, a
11 social worker, CBO, providing services, or one of our
12 guidance counselors.

13 As it relates to a shortfall mean, we could
14 always use more in every area, and some of the things
15 that we've done to be more creative about ensuring
16 that our social emotional needs of our young people
17 have been met is some of the relationships that we've
18 established with-- with colleges such as NYU and
19 Fordham, where we are working to bridge the gap
20 between social worker-- sorry, schools that provide
21 social worker training and our New York City public
22 school system to bring interns into our schools.

23 So, so far, with those great relationships that
24 we've established, we've brought about 170 interns
25 into our most needy schools.

2 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Nice. As a former CP
3 instructor, I'm a fan of that. That's-- That's
4 awesome. No, so I-- That's, that's awesome, because
5 I'm a huge fan of having more mental health
6 professionals in schools as much as possible.

7 But just going back real quick to the \$28 million
8 that has been-- that we're requesting for the school-
9 based expansion, school-based clinic expansions have
10 those-- are those being considered at all for this
11 executive budget plan, if you could speak a little
12 bit more to the-- to that piece of it?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: It is not included in
14 the executive budget plan. But we do continue to
15 work to expand our school-based mental health clinics
16 wherever we can and-- and welcome additional funding
17 and support to do so.

18 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: And sorry, just to clarify:
19 For the mental continuum for each agency, what's the
20 breakdown per agency?

21 Sorry. I should have asked that earlier.

22 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: I can get back with you.
23 I know that Health + Hospital, I believe, is roughly
24 around \$2 million. DOE also a little bit over \$2
25 million. And for the New York City Well for School

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2 Health, I believe is around \$800 or \$900. But I will
3 have the exact figures for you before the hearing
4 concludes.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Schulman.

7 COUNCILMEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. Good
8 afternoon, all. And, Chancellor, I want to thank you
9 for all the work that you and your team does. You've
10 been-- Your team has been very responsive to me in
11 the schools in my district. So I really appreciate
12 that. I want to give a particular shout out to Mark
13 Treyger over there. So--

14 MR. TREYGER: Thank you.

15 COUNCILMEMBER SCHULMAN: Yes. You're-- You're
16 doing a lot of work. I wanted to ask: So in your
17 testimony, you-- you said that you projected
18 enrollment declines of less than 1% in grades K to
19 12. So why is there still budget cuts on the table
20 for DOE?

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, we're not talking about--
22 - there's not going to be cuts that are going to be
23 felt at the school level.

24 COUNCILMEMBER SCHULMAN: No, no, no. I
25 understand that, but I meant in general, why are

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2 there-- why are we still cutting-- why is the budget
3 still being cut?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So we are-- So as the
5 Chancellor said, school budgets will not be cut from
6 year to year at initial.

7 We are doing our part to the PEGs to make sure
8 we're supporting the city's financial stability. And
9 we have taken a number of PEGs over the past year to
10 do that. In each of those cases, we have ensured
11 those will not hit school budgets, and we'll continue
12 to do that.

13 COUNCILMEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. How many
14 schools are at or above 100% utiliz-- utilization,
15 according to latest statistics, and how many students
16 are enrolled in these schools?

17 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We'll have to
18 get you an update on that, Councilmember. We'll get
19 back to you.

20 COUNCILMEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. If you could get
21 back, that would be great. And also the other
22 question is: How many additional students have been
23 enrolled in school since the October 31st audit
24 figures?

25

2 Um, so now I want to ask-- You mentioned,
3 Chancellor, that in terms of the lore about the class
4 size, that years three to five are going to be
5 challenging. Can you explain why that is?

6 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Dan, can you talk a little bit
7 about that?

8 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes. Happy--
9 Happy to, Councilmember. As you know, the new law,
10 which is phased in over five years, beginning in the
11 next school year requires-- caps K to three at 20
12 students, three to eight at 23, and then high school
13 25. That is all classes. That's not an average.
14 That's not across the grade span. That's not in the
15 particular school.

16 So this-- and it's phased in 20% per year. As
17 the chancellor said, because many of our classes
18 already meet these caps, we shouldn't have an issue.
19 We will comply with the law. Period. Full stop.
20 End of story. We're going to comply with the law.
21 What the Chancellor has signaled very strongly is,
22 though we will not struggle to be in compliance year
23 one (that's this coming year) and likely year two, by
24 year three there is going to have to be either new
25 money allocated by the State or significant

2 reallocation of funding. And anytime you
3 reallocating funding, as all of you know well, you're
4 talking about significant tradeoffs and some painful
5 choices being made. And so that is why the
6 Chancellor established the Class Size Working Group,
7 which is-- some of you have staff who are
8 participating, we appreciate that, to right now,
9 essentially two years ahead of time, talk about those
10 difficult tradeoffs at a city level. And then we
11 want to do that locally.

12 So we are going to be in a position again,
13 without new funding of deciding whether we are going
14 to spend more at a particular school on the arts or
15 less on the arts in order to lower class size,
16 whether on the capital funding, we are going to
17 provide air conditioning for common areas like gyms
18 and auditoriums, or we're going to build an annex in
19 a school that has 23 kids in a class. So that--
20 that's what's coming on the class size. That's why
21 the Chancellor has been beating that drum to make
22 sure everybody knows that this is coming, and also
23 very importantly, to get your input as we are making
24 these tradeoffs.

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I taught elementary school for
3 several years. And if you had 21 students in a
4 second grade class, and the teacher says, "I'm fine."
5 And the principal said, "It's fine. It works for
6 us." The law says it can't be any more than 20,
7 which means you have to hire another teacher. Our
8 projection on that is a hire of about another 9000
9 more teachers for us to be in full compliance with
10 the law. But more importantly, I think what it means
11 is that is taking away some flexibility that a school
12 principal would have to say, "My first grade teacher
13 or a secondary teacher is fine with the 21." It's
14 not up to them. And so now we're-- those dollars
15 have to be spent on lowering the class size, even if
16 they felt like it was fine.

17 I think the spirit of the law was that if you had
18 35 or 40 kids in the class, everybody would recognize
19 there's too many kids for the teacher to be
20 effective. But literally, if you're one student over
21 the number, it's not within the discretion of the
22 principal or the teacher. By law, we're going to be
23 mandated to make the additional hires, which is then
24 going to reduce the amount of flexibility that

2 schools would otherwise have with how they would want
3 to spend their dollars.

4 COUNCILMEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. Chair, can I
5 ask a couple more questions.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Quickly.

7 COUNCILMEMBER SCHULMAN: Quickly? Okay. One--
8 One question I want to ask is what plans you have--
9 We've had these discussions before about the D75
10 schools and the-- the extraordinary amount, \$2
11 billion, that spent every year for kids to go to a
12 private school. So I want to know what plans you
13 have to address that.

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: The ultimate-- Ultimately, in
15 order for us to reduce the amount of spending that
16 we're doing on Carter Cases, we're going to have to
17 enhance our programming. Programs like ASD Nest, and
18 SEED, and Horizon. Those-- Those kinds of programs
19 are the programs that parents are looking for. And
20 when they don't get it from us then they will seek it
21 elsewhere. So we've got to continue to work to
22 expand those programs, and that's part of our plans.

23 COUNCILMEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. I actually
24 have a D75 school in my district that I'd love for
25 you to see that does great work.

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

3 COUNCILMEMBER SCHULMAN: So as an example. Thank
4 you very much.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I'd love to see it. Great.
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Abreu
8 followed by Brooks-Powers.

9 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: Mr. Chancellor-- I'm over
10 here. I would like to first of all, thank you for
11 your leadership on the investments on science-based
12 reading. That approach to changing to phonetics is
13 super important to me, having been held back in the
14 fourth grade for failing the state reading exam, not
15 only once, but also twice during summer school, to
16 see this administration take this direction is very
17 welcoming. And I hope to see more investments there.

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I appreciate that.

19 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: So I do have a question
20 about clean, safe environments in our schools. There
21 has been a lot of discussion about-- about cuts. Can
22 you commit that it will-- that we will not see cuts
23 to our school cleaners in the school budget.

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: To the school cleaners?

25

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2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: To our to our nicest
3 custodial staff.

4 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: Yeah. 32BJ workers.

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes. We will
6 continue to work with our partners at OMB to ensure
7 they are fully paid. Yes.

8 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: Got it. So no commitment
9 on the record that we should not see any loss of
10 funding there?

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We can't make that commitment
12 yet today, but it's certainly something that's a
13 priority for us.

14 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: Certainly. All right. My
15 next question is-- And this is for our friends at
16 UFT. Is their anticipation that we'll see more
17 funding for teachers choice and investing in supplies
18 for educators?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: We-- There's no
20 commitments for new funding at this time. Appreciate
21 the question. Looking at it alongside everything
22 else.

23 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: Thank you so much.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Brooks-Powers followed by
25 Won.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you, and Hi
3 Chancellor and to the team. First, I'd like to thank
4 you for your partnership around the daycare payment
5 dynamic in my district. We still have some
6 challenges--

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: --but I'm looking
9 forward to having a more sustainable solution. I
10 thank Mark for all of his work, no matter the hours,
11 for answering my call and my texts, as well as the
12 providers and my district.

13 I had a couple of questions: One, in our budget
14 response, we called for the opening of DOE pools such
15 that the community members can access these pools
16 outside of school hours. Equity and access to pools
17 is an important issue for the Council. I'm carrying
18 legislation calling for partnership between the
19 Department of Parks and the Department of Education
20 to increase pool access. Can you talk about whether
21 you think opening more DOES pools to community
22 members is feasible? And what investments would be
23 required to open more of these pools to the
24 community?

25

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Mmm. I would say as a value
3 proposition, it is something I'm absolutely open to.
4 I think we have seen some of these recent drownings
5 and our students having a real challenge, and just
6 learning to swim as a life skill is something that I
7 think is extremely important. And then if we've got
8 these pools, and they are in our communities and in
9 our neighborhoods, um, they should certainly be open.
10 There are costs that are associated with doing that,
11 and we could certainly-- I don't know where we are
12 with it now. [TO DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA:] And I
13 know you want to say something. [TO COUNCIL:] But--
14 But it's certainly something that I think we'd love
15 to work with you around doing that.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, exactly.
17 Everything he said. You know, our school pools are
18 actually in use a lot of the time. So the real
19 constraint comes from how many people can be using
20 the pool at the same time, and if the school is using
21 them, or someone else, whether, you know if someone
22 else can't be using it at the same time.

23 We are working really closely with our colleagues
24 at Parks who I know we're just here, as well as City
25 Hall, to think about how we can be working together

2 to expand access, working with our colleagues at the
3 School Construction Authority and internally to get
4 some of our-- We have school pools that are
5 currently not in use, there being either small
6 renovations and improvements by our team or larger
7 renovations by the School Construction Authority.
8 And so working with both of those, so at least all of
9 our existing pools can be an operation, which will
10 help, of course.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: No. Thank you for
12 that. And then I know my colleagues have already
13 touched on the 3K components, so I'm not going to
14 belabor that. But I am interested in understanding a
15 bit better how the budget will improve, the
16 Department of Education's approach to paying
17 providers. Does it offer any ability to maybe do
18 more upfront with some of the providers?

19 And also in terms of the outreach, have-- like
20 what is being done to promote 3K enrollment? I know
21 that there's like this division between like the
22 private daycares that provide 3K and UPK versus the
23 traditional public schools. And so it's been a
24 concern that there's no, like, real outreach, or
25 resources provided for those daycare providers.

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Mm-hmm. Yup. Deputy
3 Chancellor?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Nice to see you,
5 Councilmember. How are you? So there's actually
6 extensive outreach that's been happening for not just
7 for 3K and Pre-K, but I should also say for our
8 infant-toddler programs, which weren't historically
9 prioritized around the outreach and the marketing.
10 We've invested over \$4.5 million just in marketing
11 alone, but that's an addition to the comprehensive
12 outreach that happens via our Office of Student
13 Enrollment for the entire system.

14 And so we're talking about anything from
15 thousands upon thousands of emails, robo calls,
16 outreach, hard-to-reach areas, into digital ads, and
17 MTA, subway systems, bus ads, paid-- paid ads
18 throughout different communities, social media. I
19 mean, the list goes on. There's just a number of
20 things that are happening. And we actually have seen
21 an increase in 3K application rates year over year.
22 There's about a 27% increase just from-- from 2021
23 until now. And so those are huge gains, and really
24 just a result of all the outreach that's been
25 happening.

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah. And I would say just
3 the first part of your question as well about just
4 upfront payments: That's something we are looking at
5 very strenuously right now. We're looking at ways to
6 get out in front of this, so that this is not
7 something that we're chasing the tail on a regular
8 basis. To the degree that we're in a position to be
9 able to get money into the hands of these providers
10 ahead of time and backfill our paperwork is a much
11 better system for everybody. But we're hard at work
12 at that now. We've been trying to fix this system as
13 we've been in it, and it's not easy. There are a lot
14 of regulations, state and federal, that are attached
15 to a lot of these things. But-- But just know that
16 that's something that we're working really hard to
17 try to make that happen.

18 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: [TO CHAIRS:] Can I
19 ask two more questions really quickly? Two quick
20 ones.

21 [TO PANEL:] I won't touch on the mental health,
22 but I will acknowledge my principals in my district
23 for my monthly principals meeting. They're very
24 concerned about losing those services, because the
25 funding is supposed to be sunseting for that. But I

2 know that, um, Councilmember Lee just touched on
3 that. But in terms of the special needs community
4 and the support that I'm hearing that they need. You
5 mentioned that the programs like ASD Nest are the
6 programs that parents are looking for, and that
7 you're thinking about ways to expand it. What have
8 we currently allocated to ASD Nest in this year's
9 budget? And can you talk through what expansion
10 could look like for ASD Nest? And then my second and
11 last question is: The school busing dynamic. I
12 represent Far Rockaway. I have a very vibrant Jewish
13 community, and since being elected, I've often heard
14 about the challenges to have busing services, whether
15 it be to Brooklyn or into the five towns for the
16 students. So it puts a hardship on those families,
17 and not being able to either get their kids to
18 school, which causes a whole different dynamic--

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: --or, you know,
21 just putting again, a major burden on the family. So
22 I'm just wondering-- I've talked to DOE about it.
23 I'm wondering in this budget if there's anything that
24 can help to alleviate some of that burden on those
25 families as well.

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I appreciate the questions.
3 Yup.

4 [TO CHIEF FOTI:] Do you want to speak the ASD
5 Nest expansion?

6 CHIEF FOTI: Yeah. So this school year, we
7 invested \$310 million in specialized programs
8 generally. That includes the ASD Nest program. In
9 the upcoming year, we're adding an additional \$50
10 million to cover the expansion of grades. So for
11 students matriculating, fourth graders go to fifth,
12 we-- they will need the programs to continue. So
13 that's an expansion number as well as adding
14 additional programs.

15 And within the specialized programs bucket, we
16 have a number of specialized programs. But this
17 year, we are particularly focused on the expansion of
18 programs for students with autism like ASD Nest, the
19 Horizon program, as well as the PATH program, which
20 is a relatively new program for students with
21 emotional and behavioral needs.

22 But in addition to the expansion of the
23 specialized programs, and certainly this relates back
24 to the Carter conversation, we're investing another
25 \$50 million in recovery initiatives that are--

2 include our sensory spaces staffed by related service
3 providers (we're going up from 10 to 70) as well as
4 Saturday-- Saturday Academies, which we've opened 11
5 of.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I will welcome them
7 in my district. I know PS181 has an amazing sensory
8 hall. If you haven't visited, please do. It is
9 amazing.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Mm-hmm.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: And on the busing
12 question: Thanks. Appreciate it. And as you know,
13 in any specific cases, please come to us, and we can
14 see what we can do. The reality is there is a bus
15 driver shortage across our system, also nationally,
16 but across our system, and we have some students with
17 very long routes. When we have a student we do our
18 best to make sure they can get on a bus as quickly as
19 possible. But there is an ongoing shortage that
20 we're working to solve with our bus vendors. One of
21 the things we are looking at is continuing to look at
22 alternative routes of transportation for students, as
23 it makes sense. But happy to look at any specifics.

24

25

2 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Is there anything
3 funding related that is impacting the shortage at
4 all?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: That's a good
6 question. Not directly, no. So some of the things
7 we are looking at with our vendors is are there
8 places-- places where bonuses or something like that
9 would help backfill the shortage? But we're already
10 looking at that with our vendors, frankly.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Got it. Thank you.
12 Thank you, Chairs.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I want to just clarify a
14 number. I believe you said \$214 million out of the
15 \$500 million increase in State Foundation A will be
16 used to reduce class size. Is that correct?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: \$214 million will go
18 to schools for a set of different uses of funds under
19 the Contracts For Excellence legislation, which is
20 integrated with the class size law. So there's
21 actually six different things that are allow--
22 activities that are allowable under that law, one of
23 which is class size reduction. It also allows for
24 teacher and principal professional learning. It also
25 allows for Pre-K, supports for multilingual and

2 English language learners. So there's a series of
3 things but schools have to use it for one of those
4 things. Sort of-- unlike Fair Student Funding, which
5 can be used more flexibly.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Thank you,
7 Councilmember Won followed by Dinowitz.

8 COUNCILMEMBER WON: Thank you so much, Chair
9 Brannon and Chair Joseph. Good afternoon. It's so
10 good to see you all. So right now in my district in
11 District 30 and District 24, when I'm talking about
12 school districts, I have an issue with over-
13 enrollment. There are too many students per class.

14 So next year will be the first year that DOE is
15 mandated to begin phasing in smaller class size caps,
16 according to the new state law. There is no mention
17 either in the November 2022 or February 23 amendments
18 of the capital plan of the need to create additional
19 school spaces to lower class sizes by the levels
20 mandated by the state law. So could you tell me what
21 your plan is? How long on average does it currently
22 take this to site and build a new school? And what
23 is the current cost per seat? And what are your
24 plans for building new schools in my district? I
25 know that I have three high schools and an elementary

2 school in the pipeline, but it is still not enough
3 because of the density growth. So I would love to
4 hear more about how we're going to fix the class
5 sizes, because my classes, children are standing on
6 top of each other.

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Which I know,
8 Councilmember, is very frustrating for any parent,
9 for any student in that situation. And as you say,
10 we do have some new capacity coming online. That's a
11 euphemism for more schools.

12 The next capital plan will absolutely as it
13 always does have a capacity component. In other
14 words adding seats in places where there's not enough
15 of them, which would include your district. You know
16 that that'll be part of the community engagement
17 process to determine how many seats and where, but
18 certainly, we know that your district is one of those
19 districts in a place of need. And so-- so I would--
20 I would expect that conversation to be coming.

21 COUNCILMEMBER WON: So how long on average does
22 it currently take to site and build a new school, and
23 what is the current cost per seat?

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We'll get that
25 from our colleagues at School Construction Authority.

2 I don't-- I don't know the-- the average. It
3 obviously varies depending upon the neighborhood, are
4 there spaces that are readily-- readily available,
5 and does it take a long time to identify even a space
6 to build on? And then what are the construction
7 plans that have to go into effect? You know, once
8 they are able to start designing, typically you will
9 get that school completed within three years. But
10 the lead up to when they can begin designing is
11 variable. So let me get that average for you, and
12 we'll come back.

13 COUNCILMEMBER WON: For my district, it took us
14 more than five to six years to site a location after
15 the DOE had announced that there will be a new
16 elementary school for Court Square. So we haven't--
17 We just got a site after five to six years after the
18 announcement. So the average is a very long time.

19 So while we wait for all these new schools to be
20 built from the Capital Plan yet we don't have new
21 money being added to the capital plan to build these
22 schools quickly to meet this mandate, then what is
23 your plan to be able to hire enough teachers over the
24 course of the next five years, especially in shortage
25 areas?

2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So the-- We
3 will need to hire more-- more teachers for sure in
4 order to meet the class size mandates. Just to be
5 clear, if you don't have space in a school, as you
6 don't in some schools, for example, in District 30,
7 you can hire more teachers, but other than co-
8 teaching, which is helpful, you're not going to be
9 able to open more classes because you don't have the
10 space.

11 So these are the situations that are particularly
12 difficult to lower class size, particularly in a zone
13 school. So you can't-- you know, you don't want to
14 really take the step to limit enrollment.

15 So hiring more teachers definitely is part of the
16 plan. Shortage areas continued to be a chronic
17 problem for us, although we're making some headway in
18 some of those shortage areas. But-- But space-- If
19 space is an issue, space really has to be addressed
20 in some way, shape, or form. In some cases,
21 Councilmembers, you know, there are schools that are
22 high demand. And in the same neighborhood, there may
23 be schools that are low demand. So part of-- part of
24 the strategy here is to make sure that we are telling
25 good stories and providing really high quality

2 education in all of our schools. So that may that
3 may make some of the low-demand schools high-demand
4 schools, relieving pressure on the schools that are
5 overcrowded.

6 COUNCILMEMBER WON: To follow up on my question,
7 charter schools-- how-- what is the charter school
8 budget for the next fiscal year, for the next school
9 year for advertisement and marketing? And what is
10 the advertisement and marketing budget for public
11 schools? Because our public schools do not have the
12 same dollar amount to tell those stories to attract
13 more students and a competitive landscape.

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [TO DEPUTY CHANCELLOR
15 VADEHRA:] Do you want to speak to-- [TO COUNCIL:]
16 I don't-- We don't-- I don't think we know what the
17 marketing budget is for the charter schools
18 themselves. But you're right. They prioritize that
19 as a as a way forward, to promote-- to try to get
20 more students into the charter schools. And we got
21 to do a better job ourselves of telling our own
22 stories to make our schools much more attractive.

23 COUNCILMEMBER WON: So are you going to allocate
24 more funding for public schools to-- for marketing,
25 and for...?

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, so one of the things--
3 [TO DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD:] Can you speak to like
4 some of our work around that, and what we-- kind of
5 what we-- when we first came in place, and how we
6 begin to put all of these things together?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: So I think more
8 specifically, um, I'll let Emma talk about allocating
9 of funding. But what we're doing is strat-- creating
10 and developing a marketing strategy for our public
11 schools.

12 Until Chancellor Banks began in-- last year,
13 public schools typically did not have a marketing
14 budget allocated. Those marketing efforts were done
15 at the local level, through grassroots marketing, and
16 through principals. Since his arrival, we have been
17 providing support to principals to help provide a
18 level of professional development around marketing
19 and grassroots organizing in their respective
20 communities, as well as doing an increased amount of
21 advertising and marketing from the central level.

22 You have seen an expansion in our early childhood
23 ads, as Deputy Chancellor Ahmed has talked about.
24 Forthcoming ads include information about language
25 access, and we will continue to push our efforts

2 behind individual schools by providing professional
3 development training for superintendents and
4 principals.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And we launched a new office
6 that's very focused on scaling, sustaining, and
7 restoring what works. And so really being able to
8 lift up all of this work that's happening across the
9 city, that is wonderful and amazing, that that you
10 have in each one of your districts. You've got stuff
11 that's worthy that the whole city needs to know. And
12 so we've been building-- building that as well.

13 COUNCILMEMBER WON: Can you help me understand
14 why my local charter schools are getting, apparently
15 from the DOE, their mailing addresses so they're able
16 to send mailers directly poaching our students from
17 public schools to charter?

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I don't know.

19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah. That's
20 a-- That's a long standing agreement to provide that
21 access. What we're actually working on now is
22 getting access to the charter school data so that our
23 schools can do the same.

24 COUNCILMEMBER WON: Okay, I'm going to close out
25 to yield my time. But fair student funding formula

2 is incentivizing principals to overcrowd our classes
3 on schools to maximize our funding. And I hope you
4 have a suggestion for updating the fair student
5 funding formula to account for the need to reduce
6 class sizes as the new law requires.

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I'm going to--
8 So one thing I just want to create some-- some
9 context. I know again: If you've got a school
10 that's overcrowded right now, this is not much
11 comfort. Class sizes have come down by about 10% in
12 the last five years or so. So we do have smaller
13 classes than we used to, way smaller than when I was
14 going to public school and a typical thing was 35
15 kids in a class. You don't see that very often now.
16 So that's the good news. FSF-- Fully funding FSF is
17 what has facilitated that class size reduction to
18 date. Now, as we've been talking about the law is
19 going to require us to do even more, and that's
20 something we are absolutely going to do. We're going
21 to make sure we're in compliance.

22 But just to say that the-- the funding that has
23 existed has allowed us to reduce class size. I
24 wouldn't say that it's a-- an inducement to be
25 overcrowded. It's certainly an inducement (and this

2 is this has been true forever) to not be under-
3 enrolled. That's never a good thing, to be under-
4 enrolled, fewer dollars, fewer programs for students.
5 So certainly that's the case. I don't-- I don't know
6 that I hear principals saying, "Gosh, I want to be at
7 110%, 120%, and I feel I have to for-- for budget
8 reasons.

9 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Councilmember, I would look--
10 Councilmember, I will take-- take advantage of
11 visiting some of your schools in your district. I'd
12 like to see together with you, and what some of--
13 some of the students in the schools, in fact, are--
14 are experiencing.

15 And I know your district is one of the districts
16 that continues to have real challenge around
17 overcrowding. And let's take a look at that and
18 figure out how we can we can really work together on
19 that prioritizing.

20 COUNCILMEMBER WON: Thank you. We really need a
21 new middle school.

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yep. Okay. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I wanted to just
24 jump in real quick and piggyback off of Councilmember
25 Won. What is the budget for marketing? I know this

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2 is something new. Is there an allocated number, and
3 what does the plan look like?

4 I know it's grassroots, local level. What does
5 it look like? TV ads? Bus ads? I saw one bus ad
6 last summer, and that was the last time.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: Sure. So across the
8 agency, there's approximately \$40 million dollars in
9 the last year's fiscal budget. Those dollars have
10 been divided, and we are uniting those into one
11 strategy for the entire agency that supports all of
12 the schools. That budget will include an increased
13 digital footprint, some of what you may have already
14 seen on our Twitter and our Instagram pages, invested
15 in the creation of digital content. We will also be
16 investing in as the chancellor referenced in one of
17 his pillars, Scale, Sustain and Restore works, which
18 provides an audiovisual team that will go out to
19 schools to capture innovative content that's
20 happening in and around our schools and districts, to
21 support that digital content. We will be increasing
22 the amount we spend in ethnic and community media and
23 local community newspapers, in partnership with the
24 City Hall Office of Community and ethnic media. We
25 will also be increasing what we see-- what you see in

2 communities, on buses, on subways, and print
3 advertising overall. We do not currently have a
4 contract for television advertising, but we are
5 moving toward that in the upcoming fiscal year.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Councilmember
7 Dinowitz?

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Let me just say one last thing
9 before you go on, Chair Joseph. You know, it's a
10 very interesting notion and I want you to miss-- I
11 don't want you to miss it. We didn't have a
12 marketing pot. It was spread out all across the
13 entire DOE. And so as Deputy Chancellor Lloyd came
14 in, I came-- I said, "Where's-- Where's the funding
15 so that we can start to drive this changing of the
16 narrative?" And it wasn't in one place. It was in
17 50 different places. So she's been working really
18 hard all year to bring all of that together so that
19 we do have a central pot, that we can now take charge
20 of the entire agency and drive messaging. But it's
21 taken this amount of time just to-- just to be able
22 to do that. This-- This system is so massive.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I told you that when you
24 came in.

25 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, you sure did.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We had that conversation. I
3 said, "This is a beast."

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I know. And you told me not
5 to do it.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [LAUGHS]

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: But somebody's got to do it.
8 And so we-- but we're--

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's right. But we're
10 here with you.

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: --we're pushing and we're
12 going to do it together.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Let's do it. Councilmember
14 Dinowitz.

15 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you chairs. I'm
16 still a little taken aback from what I just heard
17 that you share student information with charter
18 schools, who then go ahead and poach ours-- you know,
19 poach students. So I understand it's a longstanding--
20 -

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Let me
22 clarify. So we don't actually share the student
23 information with-- with charter schools. There's a
24 mailing list that an independent third party does--
25 does as part of--

2 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I can't even begin to
3 talk about that, because the-- the charter schools
4 are spending thousands of dollars on advertising in
5 the papers. I know we discussed the-- your marketing
6 strategy. But essentially though, those
7 advertisements are subsidized by our tax dollars. So
8 \$187 million from the department education goes to
9 rent, where charter schools don't-- nowhere else in
10 the state do they pay rent. So we're essentially
11 subsidizing the advertisement.

12 And I didn't quite get a clear answer on this
13 last time when we when we spoke: The rents. They're
14 exorbitant. Who isn't at the DOE that's auditing
15 these rents? Who is it at the DOE who's negotiating
16 the fair market value for the rents that are not in
17 DOE schools?

18 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So the we
19 don't-- we don't under the law have the-- the ability
20 to negotiate directly with the landlords for the
21 charter schools. The charters are the ones that
22 negotiate a lease and then send it to us for
23 reimbursement.

24 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: But why would they nego-
25 - I still don't understand. Why would they

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2 negotiate? Why would-- What incentive do they have?
3 I don't understand.

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Councilmember,
5 if the-- if the law gave us the ability to impose
6 rate caps or anything of that sort, we would-- we
7 would happily do it.

8 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: But there's no
9 imposition from you auditing and saying, very
10 publicly, that there may be charter schools that are
11 spending exorbitant amounts of money on rent. And
12 what's stopping you from publicizing that
13 information? From going in and seeing what the rents
14 are, and saying, "You know, if you're paying 100%,
15 above fair market value." What is preventing the DOE
16 from doing that and putting some of that public
17 pressure. We're talking about marketing to our
18 communities? I mean, this is part of public
19 communications is marketing, what the charter schools
20 are doing, how much they're-- they're costing, you
21 know, regardless of what the law is \$187 million,
22 it's costing us for what are probably unfair rents.

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I don't want
24 to cast aspersions. We do have in our charter office
25 folks who look very carefully at the documentation of

2 the rental costs, and they are not rubber stamped.
3 They are sometimes not approved. It depends upon
4 whether they are being used for the purposes that are
5 laid out in the law, which I will just say, to
6 editorialize, is not the most clearly-worded and
7 precise law.

8 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I don't think the
9 charters are doing anything-- Just to be clear, I
10 don't think charters are doing anything illegal,
11 outside the law. But I'm saying as a city agency, I
12 think you have a responsibility to put a little
13 pressure on, because I think publicly there's no
14 understanding of how much the-- how much rent these
15 charter schools are paying. It seems by-- by what
16 you said before, you don't really have control, or
17 oversight, or auditing power over the charter
18 schools. You don't have the ability to tell them,
19 "You know, you're paying a little too much in rent."
20 Is that-- Is that fair to say?

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's correct
22 that under the law, we don't have the ability to just
23 reject a proposed rent because we think it's too
24 high. That is correct.

2 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I mean, you do it for
3 our local community boards. It happens all the time
4 at city agencies. And I understand it's state law.
5 I think what I'm sug-- what I'm suggesting, is saying
6 if this is information you have, why isn't a public?
7 Do you-- Are there-- I understand there are people
8 who go-- go through and make sure things aren't
9 illegal. But do you have employees who are going
10 through and saying, "You know what? New York City
11 public, we're representing the public or public
12 schools, we're here for everyone. Everyone's welcome
13 in our classroom, and New York City public, you have
14 the right to know how your tax dollars are being
15 spent--"

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You're probably right.

17 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: "--and whether they're
18 being spent fairly or not."

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yep. You're probably right.

20 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: You don't have people in
21 your office who are kind of figuring out that
22 information?

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: They may in fact. I'm sure
24 our office knows what those numbers are, and they
25 have figured it out. But whether or not that has

2 been shared with the general public, so that
3 everybody can see exactly what those rents are. We
4 giving you the aggregate numbers, but we haven't
5 given you the full-on breakdowns of what everybody's
6 doing. And I'm going to look into that and see why--
7 is there any reason that will be preventing us from
8 doing that, so that the general public can also weigh
9 in around whether or not these rents are too high, or
10 are they are basically on par with what the market
11 would bear.

12 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: And if there's nothing
13 legally preventing you from doing it, can you commit
14 to publishing that data?

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely, yeah. If there's
16 nothing legally preventing us from doing it?
17 Absolutely.

18 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: And I would just say two
19 things before-- before time's up. One is I would
20 wish New York City Reads (I think it's a great
21 program, by the way), I, you know, love phonics. It
22 is what worked for young children. It's also what
23 works for high schoolers. And I know I've brought
24 this up at hearing after hearing about how many of
25 our high schoolers are reading at elementary school

2 and grade levels. I was disappointed to see high
3 schoolers excluded from that announcement.

4 And as we're talking about the arts in school,
5 you know, looking through your website, you post lots
6 of data about school test scores, SAT scores. Very
7 little posted on the arts.

8 And while we all know the power of the arts, it
9 is-- it doesn't seem like that-- that message has
10 trickled down to the extent where superintendents
11 have visited my schools and completely ignored the
12 arts classrooms, because there's no data associated
13 with it. The-- The higher ups at your office hasn't
14 been asking for data or information about how many
15 how many credits students get, you know, from-- from
16 arts classes, how many after school activities, all
17 sorts of data. You can get tons of data, ELA, math,
18 Regents, not enough on the arts.

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Nope.

20 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: And I think if that data
21 were published and principals were asked, or held
22 accountable on that, you'd see a lot more arts being
23 pushed in the schools.

24 Thank you, Chairs.

25 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I appreciate that.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you very much,
3 everyone.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Every one of your points. I
5 appreciate it.

6 MR. TREYGER: Chair Brannan, if I may just add
7 one more point to Councilmember Dinowitz about the
8 charters. I think it's very important to point,
9 Councilmember, is that-- and this is-- this has been
10 a longstanding practice in Albany, where they will
11 require us in the city to pay-- to pay rent and of
12 course, tuition. And you know, in this past state
13 budget, they authorized the reissuance of zombie
14 charters. And with that comes also added costs.

15 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Yes.

16 MR. TREYGER: And New York City is the only city
17 and state that has to pay this. And so when the
18 State says, "Well, we increased New York City school
19 aid by this much," what they don't always publicize
20 is what we mandate you to spend in this area, this
21 much. And that-- that practice takes a toll. And I
22 remember sitting on that side, and I appreciate all
23 your leadership here on that. And that has a
24 budgetary impact on nursery schools. And I think
25 Albany needs to-- needs-- has some more work to do,

2 sir. I'm making sure that they give us our fair
3 share.

4 COUNCILMEMBER TREYGER: I agree. Thank you for
5 that, Mark. And I would note that in your statement,
6 your-- your opening statement, you did ask for
7 support in asking for the state foundation aid. And
8 you know, you have at least one partner here who's
9 also willing to support you on your asks regarding
10 fairness in charter school policy. And if, at least
11 as far as this Councilmember is concerned, if you
12 ask, I'm there.

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Okay.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Can I just do two
15 more quick clarifications on the charter front, and I
16 think we [inaudible]. As the First Deputy said, so
17 case-by-case, different charters, different--
18 different situations. But there actually is a cap
19 overall on lease payments for a given charter in
20 state law, which is 30% of the per-student tuition.
21 So there is overall a cap. And the \$187 million,
22 \$200 million fits within that cap. And so we do look
23 at that, and folks are looking at that.

24

25

2 I also believe we actually do share the school-
3 by-school lease information, actually. So we'll go
4 back and check on that and make sure you all have it.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And just finally, on the older
6 students as well, just to be-- just to be clear, this
7 is a full-on commitment. This was just our initial
8 announcement, on getting it right at the very
9 beginning. But we've got a lot-- a lot of work to
10 do, and a number of things that we are already doing
11 for our oldest students. But we're going to we're
12 going to be doing a deeper dive on them as well.

13 CHIEF FOTI: We do already have programs that are
14 in place for our older students, and so we've been
15 offering intervention services already. We have some
16 coaching that's in place already. And for both
17 middle and high school, we'll be building out
18 structured literacy sites for next year. Forty of
19 those that we've proposed to be elementary, sixty
20 we've proposed to be secondary. Those are not
21 concrete numbers yet. But we'll be building out more
22 and more supports in that direction.

23 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Credit bearing.
24 Principals have to know that they're not going to be
25 dinged on their scores. Schools can be dinged on

2 their scores for providing students the education
3 they very much need. Thank you. Thank you for all
4 that inf--

5 CHIEF FOTI: And the arts report will be coming
6 out if it's not out already, by tomorrow.

7 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Thanks.

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right. Tomorrow.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Krishnan
10 followed by Gutiérrez.

11 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Well good afternoon,
12 Chancellor. Good to see you. And good to see all of
13 the DOE leadership here as well. Thank you for your
14 testimony today. I have a few questions on a few
15 different areas. So one we've talked about before is
16 on 3K, and the importance of it, you know, and I do
17 want to touch on a couple areas. I mean, this is
18 obviously a huge, huge priority for the council. And
19 understanding the efforts you're undertaking, we all
20 as the Council are still not satisfied with what DOE
21 is doing here to really make sure that we're
22 enrolling and meeting the need of students, because
23 we know how-- we all know how foundational it is.
24 There was recently an article in the Times that I saw
25 about, and one story struck with me mother, who was a

2 vendor riding the trains, doing so with her daughter,
3 who was also eligible for 3K. But for a variety of
4 reasons was not in the program.

5 So something-- when you hear stories like that,
6 that really deeply impact you on a personal level,
7 something isn't right in in the way that this is
8 being approached. And-- and really raising
9 questions, are we really needing-- are we really
10 reaching everyone and addressing that need?

11 So in our budget response, you know, we had
12 identified a few different solutions. One of the
13 primary ones that my colleagues have touched on, you
14 know, the delays in payments to childcare providers.
15 So I won't repeat that. But another issue was
16 extended-day programs and making sure that we are
17 actually you know, making this a priority to ensure
18 that working families and working parents in
19 particular can take advantage of this program. I
20 know how important it is, obviously as a working
21 parent, i couldn't imagine not having, um, you know,
22 extended day, overall for working parents who need a
23 full day of care.

24 So on that point, given our budget response,
25 what-- has DOE had conversations, and what, if any,

2 had been had about extended day 3K, and how you all
3 want to approach that this coming year?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Thank you,
5 Councilman Krishnan. Nice to see you. Sure. Yeah.
6 I-- you know, we've had many different conversations
7 with many of you here on the council around extended
8 day and extended year, and I've said it publicly here
9 many times that families, and working families in
10 particular, do not stop working at 230 at the end of
11 the day, and they don't stop working on June 30 when
12 the school year ends.

13 COUNCILMEMBER KRISNAN: Definitely not.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: And so we certainly
15 recognize the need for extended day and extended year
16 hours for our working families across New York City.

17 That said, we've done an incredible amount of
18 work in this past, probably, about 11 months, and
19 really just shifting seats across (unfilled seats, as
20 we've talked about previously) to areas of need to
21 meet family demand, and some of those included
22 creating more EDY seats in areas where they're
23 actually needed.

24 So that's the work that we're actually going to
25 continue. And that's all based on our providers'

2 voice on our principals' voice. They've told us what
3 they need in their communities. They've told us
4 where there are gaps. And we have moved seats to
5 where they're needed.

6 That said, we still have over 9000 unfilled EDY
7 seats in this moment. There's also just a number of
8 federal regulations that are tied to that, right?
9 And so for EDY seats, in particular, the funding
10 stream that's associated with it, its income
11 eligible, requires citizenship requirements, et
12 cetera. So not all families that actually need those
13 hours are going to actually be eligible for those
14 seats, right? And so that also is a barrier.

15 It's also not a linear path for every single
16 family, right? So many families have children that
17 are in a district school setting. And they have a
18 three year old, and they decided that they want their
19 child in the same school with that child that doesn't
20 offer EDY. So there are a variety of factors.

21 That said, we have actually opened up access to
22 families. When we got here in this Administration,
23 there was about a three month lag time for those EDY
24 seeds. And we've staffed up that team to ensure that
25 it's properly run. And we got it down to a two-week

2 turnaround time, right, which is less than what the
3 State requires. So that increases greater access for
4 families.

5 So those are the things we've put into place, and
6 acknowledge that there's still has to be work to be
7 done, to really understand where those seats that are
8 not being used, could be moved to, how to better
9 reach to families to your point.

10 I've said it before, I'll say it again, in terms
11 of infant/toddler marketing, it just wasn't a
12 priority previously. And we want to make sure that
13 we're putting the emphasis there because all of our
14 infant/toddler seats are EDY seats. So those are the
15 things that we've done. But these are the systems
16 that still need to be created and established.

17 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: And thank you for that.
18 And I just want to be clear, because I didn't see it
19 in the executive budget: Are there concrete plans to
20 extend the day or extend the year in FY 24?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Outside of the EDY
22 funded seats through our Childcare Block Grant, are
23 you referring to?

24 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Yes.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: So not at this time.
3 That would require additional CTL funding. And that
4 is not something that's been allocated at this time.

5 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: But the ones within the
6 block-grant-funded programs, are you all considering
7 doing extended day-- extended day there?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Those are-- Those
9 are already funded. Those already exist. We want to
10 make sure that they're being used, and they're placed
11 in places where families actually need them.

12 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Okay. And then my
13 second question on that point was just the-- I think
14 for next year-- There's been testimony and we've had
15 hearings about this as well, in terms of where you
16 all stand on pausing or not expanding the program,
17 and restructuring, and as you said, but are there
18 plans down the line to ex-- does DOE have plans to
19 ultimately expand the number of 3K seats, even beyond
20 this-- this next fiscal year, beyond that too, is DOE
21 committed to expanding the number of seats for 3K?

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [TO DEPUTY CHANCELLOR
23 QUINTANA:] Before you-- before you go Carolyne. [TO
24 COUNCIL:] I mean, I think what we are committed to
25 is meeting the needs of what the community demand is.

2 We're-- we're not committing publicly now, or will we
3 say we're expanding it for the sake of expanding.
4 I'm not going to say we're going to 61,000 seats,
5 just so I'm on the record as saying that. If the--
6 If the market is not demanding that number, then why
7 would I do that? But-- but as we're getting more
8 families coming into the city, and there are students
9 that need those services, and that is what the
10 information that we get, then we will be prepared to
11 meet the demand.

12 And that's what this is now. We've never wanted
13 to say we're not trying to get to a certain number.
14 We simply want to meet where the demand is, and
15 that's been part of what we've been focused on.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: And we want to make
17 sure that it is driven by the needs of families in
18 their communities, right? And so over this past
19 year, we have actually moved around over 4,000 unused
20 seats, 2,000 of those being placed in 3Ks or made-
21 for-3K seats, where there was unmet demand for
22 family, right? So this isn't about reducing 3K
23 seats, but it is about getting 3K seats where they're
24 needed.

2 We've also moved seats to where we need to fill
3 gaps of articulation. And so we've had a number of
4 programs that had infant/toddler seats, pre-K seats,
5 and no 3K seats. So if you can imagine for a family,
6 that lack of continuity of care and learning for
7 their child, that moving around, that transition that
8 has happened, those are the pieces that we're filling
9 in the blanks for to make sure that, again, families
10 have access to what they need in their own community.

11 That work will continue, I should say. That--
12 That's not going to stop. And that should continue
13 year after year. We should constantly assess what
14 the needs are, community by community, zip code by
15 zip code, so that we fully understand what the needs
16 are for families.

17 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. And then
18 switching gears: Foundation aid. We spent a lot of
19 time talking about that. How do you intend to spend
20 the additional foundation aid coming in that, well,
21 obviously was a result of litigation. We as the-- as
22 the city are entitled to it, and individual school
23 districts are. So what is the plan, thematically, at
24 least? I mean, you may not have some specific, you
25 know, proposals in mind. But at least what is the

2 plan? How is foundation accounted for? And what is
3 the plan to spend that money?

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Mm-hmm. [TO DEPUTY CHANCELLOR
5 VADEHRA:] We talked about a lot earlier, but you want
6 to just kind of do a breakdown again?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes. Yes, of course.
8 So in terms of the increase of foundation aid, a bit
9 over \$200 million of that money is going to go to
10 schools directly for the uses required under the law,
11 that contracts for excellence legislation. So that's
12 a series of uses that we discussed earlier that
13 includes his class size reduction, but also a set of
14 other activities schools can spend the dollars on:
15 Teacher and principal quality, pre-K, English
16 language learner, and multilingual learner programs,
17 additional time on task for kids. So that'll be one
18 chunk of the money.

19 A chunk of the money will actually-- This is the
20 increase we're talking about, because all the other
21 money is out already.

22 An additional \$90 million-ish will be going
23 towards supporting our improvements to the fair
24 student funding formula. So those dollars will go
25 into fair student funding to support the new weights

2 that came out of the Fair Student Funding Working
3 Group, including a new aid for students in temporary
4 housing. So any school serving one of those students
5 will see additional dollars for that student. That
6 will be paid for out of the state foundation aid, as
7 well as a new weight for schools with high
8 concentrations of students with need, which also came
9 out of the Working Group, that new weight will also
10 be paid for First Aid Foundation Aid. The remainder
11 of the dollars will be used some for special
12 education programming, and the remainder actually for
13 our rising charter costs which are continuing each
14 year.

15 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. And this is
16 kind of tangentially, but, you know, my constituents
17 who have-- who are children with disabilities-- who
18 have children with disabilities in the DOE system,
19 have experienced extensive delays in special
20 education evaluations conducted by both DOE and
21 independent evaluators. These delays harm my
22 constituents and their children's education progress
23 and exacerbate underlying disabilities. So, you
24 know, it's-- And of course, obviously this in some
25 level too incentivizes evaluators in these long

2 delays to prioritize wealthier families than children
3 who can't afford to pay for it out of pocket.

4 So what is DOE planning to do to address this
5 issue? How can we expedite and devote more resources
6 to addressing this-- this delaying payments?

7 CHIEF FOTI: Yeah. Thank you. We allocated \$80
8 million this current-- current school year for
9 additional recovery services. And a portion of that
10 was included allocation for additional money for our
11 IEP teams to conduct those evaluations. It is
12 something that we are very cognizant of and agree on
13 the need for sure. Next year, we're going to-- for
14 the upcoming school year, we're going to allocate
15 another \$50 million, and we will look at how that
16 money is distributed, keeping in mind that
17 evaluations are-- are critical to the recovery of our
18 students and the-- quite frankly, for the progress.

19 I wanted to, if I may circle back to a question
20 that was asked earlier about the number of preschool
21 students awaiting placement. We have approximately
22 as of last month's number, about 385 of our over
23 10,000 students that we're still in the process of
24 arranging services for. But as always, we assure you

2 that those services will be arranged and it is
3 something we're keeping a close eye on.

4 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. My last
5 question, Chair, and then I'm done, is around
6 bilingual education. We've-- I've spoken with you
7 all and worked with you all around this too for a
8 long time. I know it's-- it's a priority for you
9 all. But there is a disparity between you know, the-
10 - the importance of it that I think we all share, but
11 then all the stories coming out to have number of
12 asylum seekers and their students and fam-- children
13 who are coming here who are not getting adequate
14 bilingual education, as a starting point, right?
15 Even putting aside families in the system already,
16 children of immigrant families were already here, not
17 just asylum seekers or new arrivals. It's a big
18 issue, and I know there are things like the
19 certification process for teachers that takes a very
20 long time, but the need is great. The need is here.
21 It's definitely exacerbated by asylum seekers coming
22 here too. And so the urgency of DOE really doubling
23 down and prioritizing this issue, I think is even
24 more heightened.

2 So where-- And I know Melissa Ramos testified
3 before. Has-- We've had conversations and worked
4 together on this issue as well. But I do think that
5 there's much, much more to do here. So we'd want to
6 see what the DOE-- Really, what are your plans to
7 significantly expedite the commitment, tangibly, to
8 expanding bilingual education, to getting students
9 English language learners in schools that have
10 bilingual programs, and really beefing those up.
11 Because even schools, like, in my district, for
12 example, aren't getting the resources they need,
13 despite having bilingual programs, and despite being
14 two immigrant communities that really value bilingual
15 education.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: So this year, we
17 opened nine new bilingual education programs, and
18 we're slated to open 36 more for next year. We're
19 also working with superintendents and districts to
20 identify additional locations that may be interested.
21 We have already applications from 50 new bilingual--
22 from 50-- to open 50 additional bilingual education
23 programs in the fall of 2024. So there is interest,
24 and we're looking at how we can develop these so that
25 we can build them out. We're also making sure that

2 we have enough teachers for these programs. And so
3 we've been working very closely with the TRQ (Teacher
4 Recruitment and Quality) team to identify teachers.
5 We're holding fairs virtually. We're holding them in
6 person. And we're taking advantage of our
7 relationships with institutes of higher education.
8 So working alongside, for example, Relay, and CUNY
9 and the Ed-Prep programs that they have to increase
10 our teacher pipelines. But we're very much
11 interested in expanding the number of bilingual ed
12 programs that we have.

13 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Well, I would love to
14 work with you all really at a deeper level in this
15 area. In Jackson Heights and Elmhurst, you know,
16 these are two neighborhoods that welcome bilingual
17 programs. I'm a strong, strong believer and
18 supporter in them. So I do hope we can find ways to
19 partner together to really increase resources for
20 bilingual programs.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We will take you up on that
22 and look forward it.

23 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Sure. Thank you.

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

25 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Thank you.

2 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you, chairs.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Councilmember Gutiérrez?

4 COUNCILMEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Chair. All
5 right, I'm going to try to make it under three
6 minutes. Hello, y'all. So I wanted to just
7 emphasize the importance of marketing. In the June
8 hearing after the budget vote I had asked the
9 Administration what the plan was for enrollment in
10 school districts that I represent, like 1432, and on
11 the queen side-- on the Ridgewood side of district
12 24, which I know is untraditional for district 24, we
13 are seeing a steep, steep decline in enrollment.
14 It's an Ridgewood, it's closest to gentrifying areas.
15 I asked what the plan was.

16 I'm aware, about a year ago, there was no plan.
17 I think marketing is a piece, but I think something
18 that's been very successful in other parts of my
19 district has been community school model, community
20 school investments. We've seen it at MS 50, where it
21 was a renewal school, and Chancellor, you-- you got
22 the chance to come out last year, and the school is
23 thriving. And so I'm curious what the plan is. What
24 is the future for community schools? What is the
25 opportunity for expansion? I truly, truly believe

2 that there is a solution, especially in this migrant
3 crisis, but more importantly in response to the-- to
4 COVID.

5 So would love to know what is the future? I'm
6 also understand-- understanding that there's been
7 immense delays and contracts and reimbursement for
8 these providers and these schools.

9 I'm just going to sound off all my questions and
10 then you can go off. I'm sorry.

11 So just the community school piece is really
12 important. In that same breath, I would love-- I
13 haven't heard anything about MSQI, Middle School
14 Quality Initiative, which is vital, vital to my
15 middle schools. And I say this because it is a
16 program that attracts more families combating the
17 enrollment issue. So I'd love to hear about that.

18 And then the last piece, and Dr. Ahmed knows
19 this, and so does Mark Treyger, is about my early
20 child care providers. I know many-- and Chair Joseph
21 has been leading this, about bringing us-- bringing
22 all our providers up to date. I would love to
23 understand, if you could expand a little bit more on
24 on EDCs role in reimbursement. At a hearing that
25 Councilmember Fariás chaired a couple months back, we

2 learned that EDC was going to be reimbursing some
3 childcare providers. So they didn't have a lot of
4 information then. I hope you can shed some light.

5 And then if you can share a little bit about what
6 the long term plan is. I know you all work really
7 hard to get us to a good place on-- on where some of
8 these providers are not going to have to be so backed
9 up. And as you know, some of my providers are-- I
10 don't know what the expression is, but they're
11 robbing from one center to be able to fund the other,
12 so that they could pay their providers on time, and
13 they're unable to retain quality providers because
14 they cannot guarantee that they will be paid on time.

15 And frankly the system of encouraging them to
16 apply for loans to make payroll is a bad cycle that
17 we as the City of New York are encouraging them do.
18 We are in debt to them. So we'd love to hear what
19 the long term plans are for that.

20 So community schools, MSQI, and early childcare
21 providers. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

22 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: I'll begin addressing the
23 questions about community schools. So we, as an
24 Administration, deeply believe in the work and this
25 commitment, and we know that community school works.

2 Over the last two years, we have significant
3 increases in the number of community schools. We
4 went from having around 260 Community Schools to now
5 having a little over 400 community schools. So
6 definitely something that we believe. I think the
7 challenge that we're facing at this time is that
8 about \$55 million from the new community-school-
9 funded sources is from stimulus money. And as we
10 know, we're going to be running out of those
11 resources after this upcoming fiscal year. So I
12 think that while we believe in the model, we believe
13 in the supports, and completely agree with what
14 you're flagging in terms of having ingredients to
15 support some of the challenges that we have, even
16 with our new migrants, that we have to first focus on
17 a sustainability plan for the current community
18 schools that we have, given the stimulus-funded
19 resources that were leveraged and dedicated for
20 these, that this Administration is inheriting, that
21 we're now looking to problem solved.

22 In terms of the contract question that you have,
23 and I think you're specifically speaking to the
24 amendment that was done that was supported by City
25 Council, nine of those contracts have been a newly

2 registered after going to PET, so we can pay if they
3 register for our-- with the comptroller, and then
4 some of them are waiting for CBO to sign off.

5 So the moment that the contracts are registered,
6 go to the comptroller, go to PET, as we know it's a--
7 it's a little long of a process. But once that
8 happens, my team is ready to work with the CBOs and
9 to expedite payments. So we're happy to continue to
10 support with that.

11 And I know you have other questions. And before
12 I allow my-- turn to my other colleague,
13 Councilmember Lee, I wanted to go back to your
14 question about the mental health continuum and the
15 funding, and the specificity of each of the agencies.
16 So Health + Hospital gets \$3,740,000 out of that \$5
17 million funding. So they had the larger chunk of the
18 \$5 million that you were just describing. DOHMH
19 receives around \$472. And DOE receives close to
20 \$800,000. So that's how the actual money is divided
21 amongst the three agencies that support the program,
22 to clarify your question. And I know that we lost
23 Councilmember Brewer, but I wanted to-- momentarily,
24 but I wanted to go back to her question about chronic
25 absenteeism and our numbers, just in case if they're

2 still being requested. So I can say that we have, at
3 this time, about 27,000 students in 12th grade who
4 have missed 10% or more of school. I just think that
5 we need to continue to norm our language about what
6 chronic absenteeism means.

7 So as an example, I'm a parent of a New York City
8 public school student. He happened to be ill last
9 month and couldn't go to school for a few days. He
10 was chronically absent that month, but his
11 pediatrician didn't allow him to go to school because
12 he had a virus. So just continuing to know that we
13 need to look at all buckets of students who are
14 chronically absent, and we agree that more-- we're
15 going to continue to improve in this area. Thank
16 you.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Hi, Councilmember
18 Gutiérrez. So I think I have your-- your three
19 questions here around early childhood EDC, provider
20 increase, and sustainability, but you tell me if I've
21 missed anything.

22 So for EDC, in November, this past November, our
23 Chancellor stood up a stabilization fund to really
24 support to stabilize the sector. So that ensured
25 that all providers for fiscal year 2022 were paid 75%

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2 of their contract, had they submitted all of their
3 invoices and had an earn that through payments. And
4 EDC is the is the is the agency in which those
5 payments were actually provided. So I think that
6 might be what you're referring to, but you should let
7 us know if that's not.

8 COUNCILMEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: No, no. That's
9 correct. And is that only for FY 22? And is there--
10 is there intention of utilizing them in the future
11 for this purpose?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So right now, that is
13 for FY 22 for the stabilization fund in which there
14 has been over 100 eligible providers identified.
15 Close to \$70 million can be paid out to them.
16 Already nearly \$10 million has been beat out to two
17 providers. And so that is through EDC.

18 Provider increase, you know, to reach out to me
19 directly or to Mark Treyger, either of us, and--

20 COUNCILMEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I do, but it's
21 systemic. Again, this is not sustainable, y'all.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Not sustainable. And
23 you and I've talked about that in terms of
24 sustainability, and needing to have an infrastructure
25 that's really much more sustainable than what we

2 have. And you've heard the chancellor discuss
3 briefly, and we hope more to share, to make sure that
4 we have a system in place in which providers can have
5 predictability, right? Predictability from month to
6 month and so that they can really plan and support
7 families and their children on a consistent basis.

8 And so we're looking into some dramatic changes
9 that can hopefully transform the system in a way
10 that's much more sustainable for our providers who,
11 you know, like Nuestros Niños, who may be a much
12 larger, you know, provider, but with so many of our
13 providers that are small business owners.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Can I ask one more
15 question? Do you have a sense if-- or can you share
16 the data for any providers that are potentially
17 leaving their contract with NYC public schools as of
18 the fall? I mean, I know one particularly in
19 Ridgewood that contracted with the city to be able to
20 subsidize seats, and they're no longer doing that
21 because they could not count on the reimbursement
22 from the city.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I don't even know that
24 one. So if you know that one, please share with me.
25 We haven't been informed of anyone withdrawing from

2 their contract at this time. So-- So no, that hasn't
3 been the case.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Restler
5 followed by--

6 COUNCILMEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I had a question about
7 MSQI, and that was sick. Thank you.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I'll answer quickly.
9 So as a former high school literacy coach, this--
10 this is a question that actually matters quite a bit.
11 So MSQI practices, staffing, and funding have been
12 integrated into our literacy collaborative. So we
13 built up a much larger literacy team that spans from
14 elementary up into high school, and borrowed many,
15 many of the practices from MSQI. We have MSQI
16 coaches that are part of that team, including things
17 that perhaps we didn't have in place before. So
18 working directly with leaders to make sure that we're
19 planning strategically and providing that kind of
20 programming support, really building out intervention
21 blocks and other pieces that MSQI does really well.

22 In addition, we've built out other opportunities
23 to-- to practice those literacy strategies and to
24 build up those structures. So our lighthouse
25 collaborative, that is a school sharing organization

2 where you actually look at data together and you go
3 through actual-- both problems of practice and shared
4 practices. We're using that as an opportunity to--
5 to actually expand some of the work that MSQI is
6 doing, and our literacy collaborative as a whole.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Real quick, I
9 just want a followup question on the ECE issue by
10 asking: What's the status on the essential analysis
11 report? Can you give us some top lines? And when
12 can the Council get that report as well? That's for
13 First Deputy Chancellor. If you can also guarantee
14 the providers getting paid two weeks after submitting
15 invoices, that would be also helpful. And funds to
16 outreach that reach-- communities that are hard to
17 reach. And that's one things we talked about,
18 especially with early childhood 3K seeds. How-- How
19 are we doing that through ethnic media and the other
20 outreach that we were talking about earlier?

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes, Chair.

22 First on the Accenture report, and for those who may
23 not be as familiar as the as the Chair, this is a an
24 analysis that was done by the consulting firm
25 Accenture on enrollment projections for next year and

2 the following year for pre-K, 3K, as well as
3 infant/toddler. So we have been going over the-- the
4 analysis that they have done. We're still going over
5 it. But we expect to release that in the next week.
6 We will get that to you as well. We want to do that
7 and not just send it to you Chair, but offer a
8 briefing because it's detailed by zip code. So we're
9 actually digging into it, try to understand it
10 ourselves. So we will get that to you shortly on the
11 Accenture report. And your-- your question...?

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Invoicing being paid out two
13 weeks after they submitted versus...?

14 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So our
15 standard-- our standard now is 30 days, and we're
16 not meeting that in all cases.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No, you're not.

18 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So we've got
19 to walk before we run, and-- but but in many cases,
20 this is-- we are learning. In many cases we are
21 paying as early as the next day. So we're-- we will
22 absolutely consider whether we can shorten that to--
23 to two weeks. Right now. We want to make sure we
24 get to meet the 30-day standard in all cases.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And 3K new RFPs, will that
3 be issued next fiscal year?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So that's going to tie
5 back into the findings from Accenture. From what
6 we're seeing, again, back to just being very data
7 driven. And so where we see that there are areas of
8 unmet need and an RFP is actually necessary, it's not
9 about just shifting seats to another community. An
10 RFP will absolutely be issued.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct. And we look
12 forward to your briefing on-- once you get the
13 report. Councilmember Ressler?

14 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much, Chair
15 Joseph and Chair Brannan. I appreciate both of your
16 leadership. And it's good to see you, Chancellor and
17 team. I always appreciate the opportunity to engage.

18 So I just-- A few just clarifying questions. I
19 think-- I hope I know the answers to all of them, but
20 just wanted to make sure I understood the commitment
21 about not holding our schools-- about the commitment
22 to hold our schools harmless in in the upcoming
23 school year.

24 So, I think there were over 300 schools that saw
25 a 5% reduction in their enrollment, 322 To be exact.

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2 None of those schools will see a reduction in their
3 budget year-over-year from this year to next year?

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Correct.

5 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: And regardless of where
6 the school's enrollment is, relative to the pre-
7 pandemic levels, none of those schools will see a
8 reduction in their funding year-over-year from this
9 current school year to next?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: From this current
11 school-- from this current school year to next in
12 terms of their initial budget allocation [crosstalk]-
13 -

14 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: And so that's the next
15 one: Initial budget allocation. So that means
16 you're committing to hold these schools harmless
17 until mid-year adjustments? Or until when?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So basically, what
19 that means is we're committing to hold schools
20 harmless upfront in terms of all the dollars that
21 flow to them at the beginning of the year, which is
22 40 to 45 different funding streams--

23 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Right.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: --that our team is
25 working to finalize.

2 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Understood.

3 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So across that set of
4 funding streams, we will be holding them harmless.

5 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Until when?

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: At this moment, we
7 will be holding them harmless for their initial
8 allocations. This is not about--

9 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I understand. But if I'm
10 a principal of a school, and I've got a Chancellor
11 telling me, "We're going to hold you harmless. We're
12 giving you all the money. But we're going to change
13 our mind at some point during the school year." It's
14 not-- It's very difficult to plan. And so I don't
15 want to be in a situation where I'm going to my
16 principals and saying, "We got a commitment that
17 we're holding y'all harmless," but they say, "Yeah,
18 but until mid-year adjustments, or until November. I
19 don't know when." And so I'm just trying to
20 understand from you all: Is there any time
21 commitment whatsoever beyond, you're trying to get
22 through this budget and you want us to approve-- you
23 want us to go easy on you today, that that schools
24 are going to be held harmless for the entire school
25 year?

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2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: This is a commitment
3 about initial allocations, not about mid-year
4 adjustments.

5 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: But-- So until mid year
6 adjustments?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So between now and
8 mid year adjustments is our whole budget appeals
9 process where schools can come in and say either, "I
10 have additional needs for special education
11 staffing," and so all of those dollars--

12 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: If schools appeal and
13 successfully get additional dollars, then that'd be
14 great. But I'm just trying to understand: For every
15 other school that doesn't have an appeal is there--
16 there's a commitment that this funding-- that you're
17 not cutting any funding until mid-year adjustments?
18 That's basically the the point of this announcement?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: And there will also
20 be additional SAMs-- additional dollars that also
21 flow out to schools in other ways, right? So this is
22 about this first set of funding streams, which is a
23 large amount of school budgets, and that's what it is
24 about. There will continue to be budget appeals, and
25

2 there will continue to be additional funding
3 allocations that go out to schools.

4 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Okay, I think this gives
5 schools an opportunity to plan but I'm sure they're
6 going to be concerned that the commitment is just for
7 the first few months of the school year, and that we
8 don't have a commitment for the school year that they
9 can have confidence that this is their total budget.
10 Because if we were to go back and-- and make dramatic
11 reductions that this Chancellor and all of you have
12 threatened, and said you're-- and the Mayor have said
13 you're intent to do for the last six months-- the
14 last twelve months, uh, plus, then schools could
15 really be in the lurch come the middle of the school
16 year if you decide to-- to follow through on your
17 previously stated intentions to cut school funding at
18 mid year. We have no commitment beyond, "This is an
19 initial allocation, this should get-- and we'll
20 reassess mid year." That's-- that's my takeaway from
21 what you're saying.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: This commitment is
23 about initial allocations.

24 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Okay. [TO CHAIR:] Would
25 it be okay if I did 30 more seconds on 3K? [TO

2 PANEL:] 30 seconds though is maybe a little bit
3 optimistic. So I'm just going to start on 3K and
4 chairs will kick me.

5 We've talked a lot about the devastating \$850
6 million in cuts to the 3K program, and what I
7 perceive as the neglectful destruction of early
8 childhood education under this Administration's
9 leadership. I have to say, considering the extensive
10 evidence of the success of early childhood education
11 and the benefits it has for long-term employability,
12 income, blood pressure, likelihood of using drugs,
13 and so much more, I'm really disappointed by the cuts
14 that we're making. And considering that every dollar
15 we invest in early childhood education is \$8 back to
16 the City of New York, this \$850 million cut is truly
17 closer to \$7 billion in cuts over the-- over long
18 term. That's how I perceive it, and I think it's the
19 right way to look at it.

20 So I just-- We're going to get some applications.
21 I believe you're-- you're sending out updates to
22 families this week of who's getting in to which 3K
23 programs.

24

25

2 Could you share today, how many students will
3 receive an offer? And how many will not receive one
4 of their top three choices?

5 COUNSEL: State your name please?

6 CHIEF KLEINHANDLER: Sarah Kleinhandler.

7 COUNSEL: Do you affirm your testimony be
8 truthful to the best of your knowledge, information
9 and belief, and you will honestly and faithfully
10 answer councilmember questions?

11 CHIEF KLEINHANDLER: I do.

12 COUNSEL: Thank you.

13 CHIEF KLEINHANDLER: So high 3K offers will go
14 out this week. We-- I do not have the data to share
15 right now.

16 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Why not, if they're going
17 out in 48 hours?

18 CHIEF KLEINHANDLER: After 3K offers go out,
19 we're happy to share all of our enrollment data from
20 3K, Pre-K, kindergarten, middle school, and high
21 school.

22 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: All right, there are
23 70,000 first graders in DOE schools, down about 15%
24 from pre-pandemic levels, but pre-K enrollment is
25 down 30%, and only 40,000 three-year-olds applied to

2 3K this year. Why did 20,000 three-year-olds not
3 even apply to 3K? You know, Robin Hood and others
4 have had found in their research that half of New
5 York City families did not apply to 3K because they
6 were totally unaware of their child's eligibility.
7 Could you share your perspective -- I don't know if
8 that's for Dr. Ahmed, or the Chancellor -- on why
9 20,000 three-year-olds didn't even apply? And then
10 I'll stop.

11 CHIEF KLEINHANDLER: We have application data
12 that went up for 3K. Our 3K applicants are up about
13 two-- by about 2000. So I'm not aware of that. I do
14 know that we've done extensive outreach. And other
15 than that I what I can tell you is that our 3K
16 applicant data is up. Deputy Chancellor Weisberg had
17 mentioned, I think, two hearings ago with under Chair
18 Joseph's leadership that we were up to 42,000
19 applications, I believe was the number, which is a
20 slight uptick in the right direction, but still
21 dramatically down. And there are tens of thousands
22 of three-year-olds that are not being engaged because
23 we're not doing any outreach anymore.

24 So, I'm-- you know, to me, the crispest possible
25 indicator that we are not doing our jobs is the fif--

2 that only 50% of 3K and pre-K seats at the extended
3 day, extended year seats are being filled.

4 And so the question I have is, you know, to me,
5 we're leaving these programs empty, we're sending the
6 kids to the school-based programs instead. I don't
7 know why that's the perspec-- that's the preference
8 of the Department of Education, but the data clearly
9 shows 85% to 90% of our school based programs are
10 filled, 50% of our CBO programs are filled. Can we
11 start having CBOs enroll kids directly, so that they
12 can just bring people directly into their programs?
13 Because these are the seats that our families really
14 need. And I think it's the DOE bureaucracy that's
15 the problem.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So there's a few things
17 that you've said that we want to respond to.

18 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Please.

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So one around-- let's
20 just start with the outreach and to our Chief Officer
21 for Student Enrollment Sarah Kleinhandler, who just
22 mentioned that application data is actually up and
23 there's actually an increase year over year, right?
24 So that's-- that's a fact. And based on that fact,
25 it really connects back to the comprehensive and

2 robust kind of outreach work that happens through the
3 Office of Student Enrollment for the entire agency,
4 but specifically around 3K.

5 And there's a tremendous amount of outreach that
6 takes place specifically for 3K and pre-K. I'll name
7 a few again, but email campaigns to nearly 100,000
8 families who signed up for information, information
9 sessions for families that are interpreted in the
10 nine most common primary languages, in addition to
11 English, community events, resource fairs, back to
12 school fairs led by local organizations, FDNY block
13 parties, NYPD National Night Out events, tabling at
14 public libraries, canvassing in high traffic areas.

15 Many of our lowest enrolled 3K programs are
16 supported with family recruitment efforts, nearly
17 7600 outbound phone calls to families to promote 3K
18 for this application period.

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Councilmember, I'm just
20 concerned. Why do you think-- what do you assume
21 we're not doing any outreach?

22 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I mean-- I have spoken to
23 people at DOE we who are part of the outreach teams
24 that have been disbanded. And we no longer have a
25 dedicated crew of folks that are focused on outreach

2 for 3K and Pre-K. And I think that's why we see in
3 the data this decline in enrollment, especially at
4 our extended-day, extended-year seats at our CBOs
5 that families desperately need. And I don't-- I
6 don't want to assume intentions, because I don't know
7 why you all have made the decisions you have. But
8 they're really disappointing decisions, in my
9 opinion. I wanted to credit you on the decision to
10 hold schools harmless for next year, at least
11 preliminarily. I appreciate that very much. Our
12 schools have been through so much. You know that
13 better than me. They need these resources right now,
14 as we tried to do our best to recover from the pains
15 of this pandemic and the loss of learning.

16 But early childhood education is a long term
17 investment that our city desperately needs. And we
18 are moving in the wrong direction based on, I believe
19 neglect, and the numbers back it up. And we need to
20 start making a concentrated effort around early
21 childhood education outreach, to move things in the
22 right direction. And I hope you'd consider having
23 CBOs directly enroll three year olds and four year
24 olds into their programs so that we don't need to cut
25 DOES bureaucracy.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Let me just speak to
3 that point, though, because enrollment for our CBOs
4 is year-round enrolling and can be done directly at
5 the program level. The infant/toddler programs only
6 can be done at the program level, right? So it's a
7 big misnomer that it's not-- that CBOs aren't
8 permitted to actually enroll children. They
9 absolutely-- that's the only way children can
10 actually enroll. And the same for 3K and Pre-k,
11 right? There's only one point in the year where
12 enrollment is actually centralized, and that is for
13 the upcoming school year for 3K Pre-K. And that's
14 simply for families to make sure that they actually
15 have choices, and so that they can actually select
16 from over 12 different options, right? So it is done
17 at the program level just to make sure that we
18 clarify for you.

19 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: We'd love to work more
20 with you all in our programs to boost those numbers
21 together. I certainly believe that the Council
22 should be funding this outreach ourselves, and that
23 we should be taking on this responsibility to
24 actually make early childhood education a success.

2 I've talked for way too long, though, and I
3 apologize. Thank you for giving me the chance to
4 share some of my thoughts. And thank you for being
5 with us today. And thank you for holding our schools
6 harmless, at least preliminarily.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Avilés
8 followed Hanif.

9 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Okay, good afternoon.
10 Thank you, Chairs, and thank you to the DOE team.
11 Chancellor, as you know, I'm really delighted with
12 the work you've done around dyslexia. And we know
13 that's, you know, life changing for-- for many, many
14 students and their families. But I am concerned that
15 where this work falls short is with students who are
16 bilingual. And so I'd love to understand better. We
17 know that reading and writing acquisition is a
18 process that should really happen in native language
19 first, before you try to do that decoding in another
20 language you actually don't know. So I would love to
21 know, how is this initiative including bilingual
22 students, and what that looks like?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Thank you. So it
24 starts with the screeners that we use for our
25 bilingual students. And so we're right now in the

2 process of piloting screeners that are available in
3 Spanish for our Spanish speaking students who make up
4 the bulk of our bilingual students. We are also
5 looking at practices that are specific to those
6 English language learners.

7 What we do know though, is that when we use the
8 home language, when we use the child's native
9 language, and we allow that through translanguaging,
10 through bilingual practices in a transitional program
11 and in our ENL programs, we know that our children
12 have much more success. We need them to become
13 fluent in their native language, and they can build
14 that fluency in their second language, right?, or in
15 their English language. And so that is absolutely
16 something that we're working on.

17 We are learning and have been reaching out to a
18 number of different folks to learn more specifically
19 about strategies that will help support our range of
20 English language areas. And if there are resources
21 or particular groups that you recommend that we
22 connect with, I would love to hear more about that.
23 But we have been working with institutes of higher
24 education and some professionals, and even our

2 Literacy Council made up of a range of different
3 literacy folks to learn more about that.

4 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, we know that in
5 district 17, with Creole students that they showed
6 great progress and-- and we have a good number of
7 students in our district, and actually, someone in
8 particular who's been working on this and watching
9 our students fall, fall, fall behind in this area.
10 So I'd love to work with us more on this issue.

11 Just to segue really quickly in terms of the--
12 the charter schools and and kind of their siting and
13 obviously-- a charter school was recently sited in a
14 warehouse on a truck route in my district, and I'm
15 mystified that anyone would have thought that that
16 was fine to have small children in.

17 How does-- So you're not-- you're not
18 negotiating, obviously, the rents, but-- but how does
19 DOE assess, like, appropriate location for elementary
20 school children?

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So,
22 Councilmember this is in a lease site. This is not
23 in a DOE building.

24 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Not a DOE building. In a
25 lease site.

2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah, that--
3 that that probably is something that could be DOHMH
4 looks at, certainly Department of Buildings looks at.

5 That's not something that we have jurisdiction
6 over. But they-- they-- certainly in order to get a
7 permit to operate a school there, they would have to
8 go through pretty extensive approvals. That's just
9 not with our-- with our agency, but we're happy to
10 follow up.

11 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Sure. I'd love to follow
12 up. I'm mystified that anyone thought it was okay.

13 Just in just in terms of ELL transfer schools:
14 So we know this past year DOE launched new programs
15 for English language learners at existing non-ELL
16 transfer schools. However, each transfer school only
17 received \$50,000, obviously not even enough to hire
18 one staff member to help serve newly-arrived older
19 immigrant students. Coalitions have been advocating
20 for \$3 million to better support these new transfer
21 programs. They're really important to a district
22 like mine, although I don't have addit-- a transfer
23 school in my district.

2 Can you tell us the status of that request, and
3 how transfer schools could use this funding to better
4 serve ELLs?

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: What's the specific request?

6 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: \$3 million to support
7 transfer schools?

8 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Transfer
9 schools for older adults, older students.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Older students.
11 Yup. So we are working with superintendents to build
12 out to-- actually two different things: One was to
13 build new transfer schools for ELL students, and the
14 other was to offer those transfer programs-- sorry--
15 ELL programs within those transfer schools so that we
16 have expanded opportunities. Because we had very few
17 options, and we had them in-- in only specific
18 boroughs. And so we want to make sure that every
19 borough has a transfer school for our newcomer ELLs
20 who may be older, who can receive supports, that are
21 going to help them make progress in the short amount
22 of time that they have available. And so we're
23 working alongside our superintendents to build those
24 out. And we'll continue to do that work.

25 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Great.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: And I would just add,
3 this is not new, but it is ongoing, which is if you
4 look at our sort of basic fair student funding
5 formula, and how it flows to schools, both transfer
6 schools and English learners get additional funding
7 per student in that formula. So in each of those
8 cases, there's additional dollars available. But
9 that's not new. That's ongoing.

10 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Right. And thank you.
11 I'd love to-- when-- when you're able to send us-- I
12 know you started to break down the extra \$500 million
13 that's coming from the net increase. The \$90 seems
14 pretty clear. And all the rest of the kind of sub
15 programs in their allocation seem unclear. It would
16 be great to have a report on what those
17 determinations are, in particular.

18 And if I may, last question, although I have
19 many, many here.

20 I in terms of class size, obviously, this is an
21 ongoing critical issue. I guess I'd love to hear
22 more specifically. I hear there-- I hear there are
23 many trade offs and many concerns, and we're going to
24 meet it, but what I don't hear is an actual plan for
25 hiring enough teachers. An actual plan in this next

2 course of several years to be able to address the--
3 the mandates of the law. So let me know more about
4 that.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, there's no full plan.
6 There's no fully baked plan just yet. That's why we
7 put together the working group that has folks from a
8 wide range of constituencies who all have great
9 interest in this WIP. We're expecting that our plan
10 will be developed through that. I could go off and
11 develop my own plan and tell everybody what I think,
12 and then I'd be accused of not engaging larger swaths
13 of the community. We're trying to engage larger
14 groups from throughout the community with vested
15 interest in this for them that also to help us to
16 develop this long range plan. So the groups have
17 just started meeting, gotten off to a little later
18 start than we wanted to, but, but we'll be moving
19 very aggressively going forward.

20 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, I appreciate that.
21 And I-- You know, I know the-- the working group is
22 hard. But this kicks in next year. And we're
23 talking about funding, you know, years, years later.

24 So-- So what I'm asking for is what is-- what is
25 the more immediate plan to address some of the more

2 immediate needs that will come in the next fiscal
3 year?

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Dan, do you want to speak to
5 that? I mean, we're in the first two years where we
6 feel pretty comfortable where we are right now,
7 already being able to meet the mandates for the next
8 two years.

9 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: So we feel like we have
10 enough teachers to ensure classroom sizes in the next
11 two years.

12 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes, to be in
13 compliance with the law. Absolutely. Yes.

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You know, the law has a series
15 of benchmarks over the next five years, and those--
16 the benchmarks for the next two years? We are
17 already there. That's our-- that's our point.
18 That's what gives us a little bit more runway, that
19 we're going to run into the bigger challenges from
20 years three to five, not years one through two.

21 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Okay.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: And just to the
23 question on state foundation aid, in terms of the
24 full specifics, we can send this as a followup, but
25 it's about 214 that will go out to schools for those

2 uses of funds. There's another roughly \$10 million
3 that will go out to schools for special education,
4 programming and professional development. Then
5 there's another roughly \$50 million that will go to
6 other special education costs and expanded
7 programming, a little bit less. A total of \$120
8 million that will go into fair student funding,
9 including the new weights, and then roughly \$100
10 million to support increasing charter per student
11 costs. But we will follow up with the specifics.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm going to just do a
13 little follow up real quick. This morning, when you
14 stated no schools will start next year with a lower
15 school budget. We're good on that. Then it has--
16 had this school year, the city will have-- hold
17 school harmless for the initial school budget. Will
18 schools have to return money to DOE if they fall
19 lower in enrollment in the fall? And will schools be
20 held harmless at the mid-year adjustment?

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I think, essentially, that's
22 the question that Councilmember Restler was asking,
23 right?

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: It's hard for us to make the
3 full-on commitment beyond the initial allocation.
4 What does that mean? That means if, if a school has
5 500 students, but by the middle of the year, they've
6 dropped down to 200 students, we're not going to make
7 the commitment today to say, no matter what, there'll
8 be no adjustment even at that point. So I want to be
9 clear about that. We're holding them to the numbers
10 that we had at the beginning of the year. We don't
11 expect it to be any major drop off. But if there is,
12 the determination of whether or not they will still
13 be held harmless, no matter if half the school
14 population leaves, we're not at that point yet to
15 make that commitment.

16 But those are conversations we're still having
17 with OMB to figure out whether or not that will take
18 us--

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the Council.

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And the Council. Right.
21 Takes us-- If it takes us all the way through the
22 year. You all are sitting in a great position to
23 help influence that--

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely.

25 CHANCELLOR BANKS: --that answer.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'll be the first one there.

3 CHANCELLOR BANKS: There you go.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Councilmember Hanif.

5 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Thank you. Great to see
6 you, Chancellor.

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Same, here.

8 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: And thank you to our
9 chairs. Like my colleagues have shared I echo their
10 sentiment around the relief that schools will be held
11 harmless. I've heard from countless schools, and I
12 just met with my principals recently, and we are
13 continuing to hear about how much the cuts from the--
14 from this year have harmed the educational
15 experiences and just building out the real supports
16 for school.

17 But nonetheless, you know, some of the wins in my
18 community has been the halal food program at PS 133.
19 And I recently visited the navigation center with our
20 Comptroller and I saw the walls filled with artwork
21 from PS 133 students welcoming asylum seekers. I
22 think those are really just beautiful to see. And
23 then to see the artwork across our city, but
24 particularly focused on showing to asylum seeker
25

2 families that they are welcomed here is really,
3 really important.

4 And so I'd love to know a little bit more about
5 asylum seeker students. Could you share if the
6 population estimates released earlier this month
7 include anticipated arrival of students from asylum
8 seeker families through the 2023/2024 school year,
9 including those who will arrive after the October
10 31st enrollment register deadline? And if so, how
11 many new arrivals do these estimates account for?

12 CHIEF RAMOS: I'm sorry. I don't-- Could you
13 break the question down again? I don't--

14 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: The population estimates
15 that we had released: If they account for asylum
16 seeker students, and if so, how many?

17 CHIEF RAMOS: I'm not sure of that number. But I
18 can tell you is that we have roughly seven--

19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Councilmember,
20 you're referring-- I'm sorry to interrupt--

21 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: The pro-- the projections--

22 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Enrollment
23 projections?

24 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: The enrollment projections.

2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes. And so
3 just on that-- and Melissa can-- can jump in
4 specifically on asylum-seeking families. But, you
5 know, to some extent, certainly where we see a trend,
6 the thing-- That will be incorporated. So we have
7 many schools, including in your district that have
8 welcomed, you know, in some cases, more than 100 of
9 newcomer students. Certainly we know that. So we
10 can look at that trend and include that. What's to
11 come? Very difficult for us to account for that. So
12 is it possible-- as a matter of fact, is it likely
13 that some schools will see an increase in enrollment
14 beyond the projection during the course of the year,
15 including after October? Yes, it is. And that's
16 what Chief Vadehra is talking about in terms of
17 making sure that we are staying close to our schools
18 to deal with those sorts of situations.

19 So to some extent, yes, because we have seen this
20 influx already, and we can account for some of that.
21 But some of it certainly-- certainly is unknown.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: But-- And as with
23 this past year, as we saw students continue to come
24 into our system after October 31st, we continued to
25 put out dollars to those schools as they came in. So

2 they came to us with additional enrollment, and we
3 put those dollars out. In total, we put out over
4 \$100 million, of which I think \$20 million-ish was
5 Project Open Arms. But the rest was in those per-
6 student dollars flowing to those schools. And just
7 to name it -- I know, Melissa mentioned this earlier
8 -- but one of the changes we've made in our formula
9 is that students in temporary housing, schools now
10 get a little bit more money for them. And so for
11 each of these students that are asylum-seeking
12 students, who are students in temporary housing,
13 they'll get a bit more per student to serve each of
14 those students as they come in.

15 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: That's really promising.
16 Thank you.

17 CHIEF RAMOS: The final piece I just want to add
18 to this is also the time in which we provided the
19 money to the schools for adjustment. And so as the
20 numbers come in, when we had a strong escalation
21 process in place, and so if school saw an influx, and
22 that was escalated to us, we were able to get the
23 money to the school within days, and sometimes a
24 week.

2 And so that adjustment was huge, because we
3 understand that we can't always estimate how many
4 students we're going to get. But if a school is
5 seeing those great increases, we have that system in
6 place to work with them to get them money very
7 quickly to them.

8 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Got it. Because that's a
9 question I had that if the funding is coming in, per
10 new enrollment, that creates some chaos. Is there
11 money on the front end to anticipate new enrollment?
12 Or the way you're sharing here that, like, as soon as
13 there's new enrollment, you all are working very
14 quickly with the school to ensure that every student
15 has what they need.

16 CHIEF RAMOS: So for example, a magic number for
17 us is 15, right? So if a-- if a school is getting 15
18 students in one particular grade level, or one
19 particular-- particular subject area, if we're
20 talking about high school, then we know that that may
21 warrant a new section of a class. And so they may
22 need to hire an additional teacher. They also may
23 need additional bilingual sub-paras to support with
24 students who do not speak the language. So again,
25 not to say that they necessarily need a bilingual

2 teacher or an ESL teacher. They may or may not. But
3 they also may need an additional para to support the
4 children as they're coming in.

5 Once that's escalated to us, we know that we need
6 to give them their money sooner than later. We're
7 not going to wait until January the way we typically
8 do, because those hiring needs need to be met
9 immediately.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Understood. And just on
11 that line, since welcoming these students how many
12 new social workers or new teachers have been brought
13 into the schools? Is that something that you all are
14 tracking?

15 CHIEF RAMOS: I don't have those numbers on hand.
16 We can get back to you with some data on that. But
17 what I can tell you is that--

18 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Especially, specifically
19 bilingual.

20 CHIEF RAMOS: Yeah. What I can tell you is that
21 we do work with the schools to identify if they do
22 need an additional ENL teacher or a bilingual teacher
23 depending on the model that they have. And then our
24 HR folks make sure that they are providing a pool of
25 candidates that are-- who are available to interview.

2 So it's not just posting the vacancy and saying,
3 "Here's the money, go find your teacher." We work
4 with them to help them find candidates and walk them
5 through the entire process, from interview to hiring.

6 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: And then I'd just like to
7 wrap up. Will school still receive the \$2,000? Or
8 are we continuing the Project Open Arms? Or is the
9 fair student funding formula-- the revised funding
10 formula, how we're supporting asylum seeker students?

11 CHIEF RAMOS: So we would always love to-- I
12 mean, this is a priority. And we know that the
13 students are going to continue to come. At this
14 moment, we're still working through the school
15 budgets. So we do not have an answer for you on
16 that. But what we can say is that this new formula
17 is going to really benefit schools who have a
18 population of students in temporary housing.

19 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Great, and I'd like to just
20 wrap up. I am a huge supporter of bilingual
21 education programs, and I had the great honor of
22 visiting Hillcrest High School in Jamaica, and just
23 celebrating with the Bangladeshi students who were
24 awarded seals of biliteracy. And it's just powerful.
25 I'd love to know if there's an expansion to ensuring

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2 there are more bilingual programs, and especially for
3 languages like Bengali, Bangla. And then what are
4 you all working on to make more bikable school zones?
5 That is something that I hear about many schools in
6 my district do-- They bike once a month to school.
7 I would love to know if there's collaboration with
8 the DOT in making the-- the zones around our schools
9 more accessible and bikable in particular. Thank
10 you.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: So this year, we
12 expanded to 107 schools that offer the New York State
13 seal of by literacy, so a 67% increase. And there
14 are plans to increase for next year as well.

15 It's an important part of a child's education,
16 but also a really great way to validate and value
17 what the child brings to the table, right? And so
18 that seal of biliteracy is a great way to make sure
19 that schools are honoring who the children are, and
20 it gives us an opportunity to go and train teachers
21 to make sure that they can provide the supports to
22 gain that. So we're absolutely expanding.

23 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Ossé.

25

2 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Good afternoon,
3 Commissioner. In 2014, the Department of Education
4 implemented a family-friendly special education
5 policy to refrain from re-litigating settled or
6 decided cases unless there was a change in the IEP
7 placement recommendation. Is the DOE changing this
8 policy? And if so, what is the new policy?

9 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: There is no
10 change of policy at this point, Councilmember. Just
11 to give a little bit of context, that was the point
12 at which we began to see an explosion in the number
13 of cases. So that's presenting a number of
14 challenges, but we haven't changed policy at this
15 point.

16 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Is the DOE changing its
17 approach to special education evaluations and/or
18 placement recommendations in these cases?

19 CHIEF FOTI: We're certainly revisiting. And in
20 December, Chancellor launched a special education
21 advisory council, where we're talking about these
22 exact issues: approaches to evaluations, the IEP
23 process, placement processes. We are really trying
24 to garner grassroots opinions, and thoughts, and
25 recommendations on how to-- to revamp things.

2 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you. And I do
3 remember that in August of last year, Chancellor
4 Banks, you went on record blaming the lack of funding
5 for general education extracurriculars, like after
6 school programs, on the high cost of special
7 education, and expressed a desire to cut special
8 education funding. You specifically spoke about
9 expenditures paid to private schools that educate
10 disabled students, that the DOE admittedly lacks the
11 facilities and or instructional capacity to
12 appropriately educate. Have you identified a target
13 amount that you intend to cut from the special
14 education budget.

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: So-- So I did not-- I did not
16 blame the lack of resources for other things on
17 special education, per se. What I talked about was:
18 We saw an explosion of Carter Cases, many of which
19 were also from students who were never going to our
20 schools in the first place. That-- That's the
21 comment that I-- that I made. So no. While we have
22 not identified a specific target number here, I
23 recognize that the-- the way that we're going to
24 solve this issue, Councilmember, is by providing
25 quality programming for parents across the city. We

2 have to give those parents another option. We have
3 to give them an option that where they will choose
4 us. And, and that's what we're working really--
5 that's what we're working really hard on. So there's
6 no specific number just yet that we're trying to draw
7 down. But we-- we've been watching this thing
8 escalate for several years. And it's been escalating
9 in a way here that it's not escalating around the
10 state. So that's what the goal is: Is to begin to
11 bring that down, but not a specific targeted number
12 yet.

13 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Mm-hmm. So there's not a
14 specific amount, but in general, it's the-- the
15 budget will be cut.

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, we want to spend-- we
17 want to spend less money on these Carter Cases.

18 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Uh-huh.

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And in order for us to do
20 that, that's tied directly in with what Christina is
21 talking about with expansion of this additional
22 quality programming that will give parents an
23 opportunity to now come and take advantage of the
24 programs that we have, as opposed to leaving the
25 system.

2 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Okay.

3 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So for example, I
4 think Christina mentioned this earlier, but we have
5 \$300 million this year in to some of those
6 specialized programs. And as we open 21 new programs
7 -- right? Christina next year? -- we'll be putting
8 another \$50 million into the expansion of those
9 specialized programs that we hope will keep students
10 in our system so we can better serve them.

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And that's just the beginning.
12 I mean, that's-- that's our initial foray into this.

13 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: And additionally, as chair
14 of the libraries committee, I'm a huge proponent on
15 supporting our libraries, and our libraries within
16 our schools. School-- School libraries, as we all
17 know can be hubs and centers for students to receive
18 academic support, find materials for research, have a
19 safe space to do homework or socialize. Yet many of
20 our public schools did not have funding to hire
21 librarians or pay them fairly. For example, a school
22 in my district has a defunct library that is full of
23 unsorted materials because they do not have the
24 funding to hire a librarian. What is the DOE's

2 current budget for school librarians and what is the
3 current headcount of school librarians in the city?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: So, budget, I'll
5 leave to Emma specifically. But there are-- So we
6 have-- We know that there's a shortage of librarians.
7 And part of that is that, again, it's an unfunded
8 mandate from the State. We, too, would like to have
9 a librarian in every school. It's a really big part,
10 not only of building literacy, but of building
11 community. And part of what we want to make sure
12 kids leave school ready to do is to research, to
13 engage with text, and to be able to find information
14 that is reputable. And you learn all of that in a
15 library.

16 We do have a vital libraries grant that we're
17 offering to schools, that has allowed schools to
18 actually rebuild those defunct libraries so that they
19 have not only up-to-date texts that they can check
20 out, but also that they have access to the digital
21 library. Where we have at this point had more than 4
22 million titles in circulation, which is fantastic.
23 Since 2020, we've had more than 4 million titles in
24 circulation through our digital library.

2 This vital libraries grant also allows schools to
3 create media centers that are engaging and inviting
4 for the kids too. We have a Teacher-to-Librarian
5 Program that is allowing us to build candidates who
6 can be librarians. This year, we had 18 additional
7 people on that program, and continue to partner with
8 folks to be able to have more of those spots
9 available.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I would say on the
11 budget front, I don't have that precise number. We
12 can make sure we get it to you. It is a decision
13 where, all of these decisions we're making to support
14 school budgets should help here, because these are
15 decisions made at the school level in terms of how to
16 use some of these flexible dollars.

17 That's actually not-- not true, by the way for
18 the C-For-E state foundation aid money that we've
19 been talking about. That new money has some
20 restrictions, such that I think it probably could not
21 be used for librarians. But things like fair student
22 funding, and the hold harmless as we're putting out
23 to schools. Those are dollars that can be used for
24 this. And that is where those decisions sit. But
25 we'll get you the number.

2 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: And the last question that I
3 have is: Are you planning to work with UFT to make
4 sure that every school building has a Teacher Center,
5 to make sure professional development is touching
6 every school?

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We are-- One
8 of the things that we're really pleased about is the
9 partnership with UFT on NYC Reads. And that
10 includes, in a very prominent role the UFT teacher
11 center. So we actually are working with UFT to
12 expand teacher center staff as part of this. What
13 that leads to in terms of coverage across the city,
14 we'll have to see. But that is-- that is a part of
15 the Chancellor's initiative to-- to leverage the
16 great talent we have at UFT in the teacher centers.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: And I want to just
18 give-- we have 260 certified librarians. Our middle
19 and high schools are required to have a certified
20 librarian. We have 260 certified librarians.

21 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you for that. And
22 thank you for that response on the teacher centers.
23 I would love to get you know, an update, or at least
24 some level of public tracking of the progress and
25 where those teacher centers are being expanded and

2 maybe even broken down by neighborhood or school
3 district as well. But I'm glad to hear that there's
4 some progress on that. Thank you.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Stevens
7 followed by--

8 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Good afternoon. Hi. How
9 you guys doing? I will be quick and fast, because,
10 um, it's enough. Anyway-- [LAUGHTER]

11 So I'm not even going to go into the Summer
12 Rising stuff because I've been texting Mark books
13 about it. But the enrollment has not been going
14 smoothly, because my phone has been going off the
15 hook, and I get all the complaints, because
16 apparently I'm the complaint bureau. So I will
17 follow up with you guys about the issues that I've
18 been getting, and I've been hearing, and filtering
19 out because it's not going as smoothly as folks are
20 saying it is today, because they've been calling my
21 office.

22 And I know there's been some questions already
23 around like the evaluation crisis with students. My
24 constituents -- I'm just going to get all my
25 questions, and you guys can answer them. And also

2 thank you for meeting with me with 3K and talking
3 about this stuff. I look forward to the partnerships
4 we kind of talked about. I know we sent over our
5 calendar. So I look forward to that as well.

6 CHIEF FOTI: Thank you.

7 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: My constituents have--
8 have children with disabilities and DOE systems was
9 experiencing delays in special education evaluations
10 conducted by both DOE and independent evaluators.
11 Those delays are harmful. What resources-- What
12 resources and funds-- funding with the DOEs need to
13 address those issues to reduce those delays?

14 DOE-- this is the next question. DOE's extensive
15 delays in payment to independent evaluators are also
16 leading those specialties to prioritize working
17 wealthy families, rather than children in my district
18 that can't afford it to pay out of pocket. So can
19 you talk to me: Which branch of the DOE is in charge
20 of making payments to independent evaluators and
21 providers? And does DOE have any policy governing
22 how quickly independent evaluators need to be paid?
23 And has the budget for the office of supervisors of
24 social-- of School Psychologists increased in 2022?

2 CHIEF FOTI: Thank you for this. The first
3 question in terms of evaluations: I mentioned
4 earlier that we did add additional funds to our
5 recovery budget to-- for IEP teams, and that includes
6 for evaluations, recognizing that many of our
7 students needed evaluations. In terms of the-- I'm
8 going to jump to the end and the budget for the
9 psychologists. That-- That does relate to the budget
10 for the psychologists in terms of additional hours
11 for work and time that they needed to evaluate, as
12 well as for summer teams to do evaluations and
13 Saturdays, and doing evaluations on Saturdays.

14 Regarding payments: Do you want to take that one
15 Dan?

16 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So-- Yeah,
17 payments. We just restructured that whole function,
18 because we're having some of the same issues,
19 frankly, that we've had with our CBO partners.

20 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Yeah. I know the City
21 doesn't have to pay people. We know.

22 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah. Well,
23 we're-- we're trying hard Councilmember to change
24 that. Because when people do to work, they deserve
25 to get paid. So-- So we will have more on that, more

2 specifically for the special education providers,
3 shortly, because we just moved that office and
4 restructured it. And I think you'll see improvements
5 coming very shortly.

6 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: And where did you move it
7 to?

8 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Opposite of
9 General Counsel.

10 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: All right, those are all
11 my questions. You guys are doing great. You've been
12 here for a long time.

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

14 CHIEF FOTI: Before we wrap, can I-- can I just
15 add one more piece on the Carter...?

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Sure, because I have a
17 followup.

18 CHIEF FOTI: Yes. So I just wanted to say that,
19 you know, when the Chancellor was speaking about
20 Carter Cases, for kids who are seeking tuition
21 reimbursement, our commitment has been and remains
22 that if we cannot offer a public school placement, we
23 are going to make sure that the family gets a private
24 school option. There is nothing looming or
25 compromising that process. There is no intention to

2 do anything that is harmful to parents who are
3 seeking that private placement. What we do want to
4 emphasize is that we want to serve students in public
5 school programs. And that is why the Chancellor has
6 made these investments. I mean, it is remarkable
7 that we are the only city in the country providing
8 free sensory gyms and providing the amount of
9 investments, \$300 million in specialized programs.
10 That said, there are, and you've seen in the press
11 many-- many pieces, many stories around parochial
12 schools and services to students outside. And there
13 have been some flags around that. I just want to
14 differentiate the fact that when the Chancellor is
15 speaking about Carter Cases, we are-- the concern has
16 not been about whether or not we want to pull back
17 money from our tuition-- our students that are placed
18 via tuition reimbursement.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: On the record, tell me how
20 many vacancies you have in the special education
21 department. What are your vacancies?

22 CHIEF FOTI: I'm sorry, Chair. Are you talking
23 about the central office?

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, central office, special
25 education? Because I know that when we talked

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2 earlier, I mean, the last hearing we had I know you
3 bundle up the chronic cases and Carter Cases
4 together, which ballooned the budget. So in in
5 regards to special education in the central office,
6 what-- what are the numbers on vacancies?

7 CHIEF FOTI: I have to get back to with that,
8 Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, that would be very,
10 very helpful. Because if we don't have the numbers,
11 as we talked before, we're going to continue seeing
12 these rise in Carter Cases and chronic cases.

13 So I know 40% of your budget is already settled
14 from previous Carter cases as well, according to the
15 IBO report. Is that correct?

16 CHIEF FOTI: I'm sorry. Repeat that Chair?

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 40% of the existing budget
18 that you have for Carter cases are settlement in
19 previous cases, that was what is stated in the IBO
20 report.

21 CHIEF FOTI: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is that--

23 CHIEF FOTI: I believe so.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. And \$50 million was
25 allocated to hire staff, and represent, and process

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2 impartial hearing cases, which does not help parents.
3 Is that correct?

4 CHIEF FOTI: That falls in the legal end of the
5 world, so I can't confirm that number.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: All right. Well, you will
7 get back to me on that, right?

8 CHIEF FOTI: Sure.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. Now, I'm going
10 to get into something really cool. Everything is
11 cool here.

12 I wanted to talk about PEGs for a minute. In--
13 In very clear terms, how did New York City public
14 schools meet the latest PEG imposed by OMB? What was
15 the total amount cut from your budget? Will this PEG
16 have any impact on schools? I know we said no. But
17 I just want-- I need to just reiterate-- reiterate
18 that impact on school budget, or ECE providers for
19 the year ahead. Yeah.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So the total amount
21 of the most recent PEG was \$324 million for FY 24,
22 which was reflected in the executive budget. That
23 includes roughly \$10 million in savings from the ATR,
24 the Absent Teacher Reserve. Those are folks who are
25 either left the system or already in school, so

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2 picked up by school budgets, so that won't have any
3 impact on school budgets. And that is that is \$10
4 million. There's another almost \$10 million, that is
5 basically, as we've discussed before, our school
6 safety agents. The money passes through us to NYPD.
7 NYPD reduced those SSAs, and basically, that meant we
8 saw another small savings of almost \$10 million in
9 our fringe budget associated with that. The
10 remainder of the PEG was actually met through-- and I
11 know you've seen our budget, budget presentation a
12 few times at this point. As you'll recall, there's a
13 large chunk of money that goes into fringe benefits
14 every year. That is something that is hard to plan
15 ahead for. And basically our budget for next year
16 included more money in the fringe budget than we
17 actually expect to need to pay out. And so the
18 additional \$300 million came from that additional
19 money that was in the fringe budget. That will not
20 impact schools, and it will not impact any
21 individual's actual benefits.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many-- How much of that
23 PEG was transferred, funding-- much of that DOE has
24 transferred this year from the fringe benefits to
25 other areas where funding was needed?

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2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So for next year, it
3 is-- it is still to be determined. Actually, for
4 this year, it is still to be determined as well. But
5 it is true that where we have had additional fringe
6 dollars in the past, we have used it to support some
7 of our ongoing structural deficits that we've talked
8 about, actually, in the context of today, whether
9 it's charters, or transportation, or Carters. That
10 is something we've done with those dollars in the
11 past.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: New York City public schools
13 identified new budgetary needs, and have they been
14 shared with OMB? And what are they? And what are
15 their status?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Sorry. Which new
17 needs? The new needs that were in the executive
18 budget?

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Mm-hmm.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yep. So in terms of
21 the new needs in the executive budget, I think we--
22 the Chancellor mentioned, and we talked through an
23 additional \$3.3 million. Thank you for your advocacy
24 for the shelter-based coordinators, which brings us
25 to full funding for all 100 shelter-based

2 coordinators, which we are very happy to be able to
3 do. There was a new need associated with the food
4 strategy work we are doing. So that includes the
5 cafeteria enhancement program. That's \$50 million in
6 SCA's budget to get to, as I mentioned, 80 plus
7 schools, and try and increase the cafeteria
8 experience and increase participation in our food
9 program. There's also an additional \$5.5 million in
10 there for what's called Wellness In The Schools. And
11 so this is basically us partnering with a nonprofit
12 to support the training of our-- to support the
13 training of our cooks, to build new from-scratch menu
14 items, and then scale those up over this year and
15 next year, so it will reach all of our schools over
16 the course of the next couple of years. So that's
17 another \$5 million. And then an additional \$1
18 million for nutrition education work, which my
19 colleague DC Quintana can talk about. And then the
20 last couple of new needs that were in there: There's
21 \$100 million in collective bargaining costs
22 associated with the DC 37 agreement. And there's
23 roughly \$2 million in climate education and our
24 Climate Action Plan. And so that includes
25 professional learning opportunities for teachers

2 across the system, a Climate Action Day for students,
3 and basically recognition and certification for
4 schools. And those were the set of new needs. And
5 Q, if you want to talk about nutrition.

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Sure, I can add a
7 little bit there. With the climate change too, just
8 adding that there's a teaching and learning committee
9 for climate education that will be developing
10 resources and a system wide K through 12 initiative.

11 For the food education, that \$1.1 million is
12 being dedicated to develop a food education
13 guidebook, a Food Education Council that will
14 continue to advise, and we'll be offering
15 professional development for teachers, including
16 early childhood educators, and we'll introduce
17 learning opportunities in early childhood for both
18 students and staff.

19 Creating criteria for schools to follow will help
20 us ensure that not only this kind of thinking gets
21 integrated across the content areas, changing mindset
22 and behavior, but that also people are being really
23 strategic about what resources they're employing, who
24 they're actually reaching out to as partners, and
25 what they bring into their schools.

2 And to help with that, that \$1.1 million will
3 also allow us to provide direct funding to K-8
4 schools.

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: And Chair, I realize
6 you asked. The PEG will not impact schools. It also
7 will not impact early childhood providers.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I was about to ask that
9 followup question. At our February-- , at our
10 February hearing DOE testified that the new rapid
11 response team would ensure every provider with an
12 unsubmitted invoice get one-on-one help. What is the
13 status of that team? How has it been impacted by the
14 budget? Also, when you testify, the new
15 stabilization fund would pay providers 75% of the FY
16 22 contract values, regardless of the expense and
17 enrollment, what is the status and is that impacted
18 by the budget?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So the Rapid Response
20 Team was set up by our Chancellor back in November,
21 and in less than 12 weeks, we were able to pay out
22 over \$100 million and, and actually gather over 4000
23 unsubmitted invoices from the previous fiscal year.
24 And so that work continued into January and February.
25 But we have collected as many invoices from the

2 previous fiscal year as we see probably deemed
3 possible. Providers are still able to submit an
4 invoice if they have one from the previous fiscal
5 year.

6 In relationship to the stabilization fund grant,
7 which was also stood up in November by our
8 Chancellor, that work continued in is still happening
9 right now as we start to wind down this fiscal year
10 in which over 100 providers were deemed eligible for
11 the stabilization fund. And we've already paid out
12 nearly \$10 million to a number of providers.

13 So if provider has been deemed eligible and is
14 still in the process of submitting the required
15 documentation to receive that fund, they will.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Does that apply for next
17 fiscal year as well, or just this fiscal year?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Well, that has not been
19 in place yet for this-- this fiscal year. That's
20 still a conversation that's happening. And we'll see
21 if there are any next steps.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Give me-- What
23 happened? [CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN SPEAKING ASIDE] Oh,
24 my bad. Sorry, Councilmember.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilmember Narcisse?

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2 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you, Chair. Um,
3 NYC Reads. Thank you. I was part it. Getting our
4 kids to read is the most important thing. So as a
5 mom, I'm going to tell you, thank you for having, you
6 know, the thought and the idea. And I'm very
7 optimistic. Hopefully we'll get some-- a lot of our
8 children to read. And your-- As you can see, you're
9 the famous person here because-- you know why?
10 Because with all your team, you see all of us here,
11 that's when you have allies here because we want the
12 best for our children in New York City.

13 Coming back with-- How many children of age of
14 pre-K and K that's enrolling in our-- I mean, that's
15 in our city, and how many are enrolled right now in
16 our pre-K and K?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Certainly. I can give
18 you those numbers. Our 3K enrollment is roughly
19 43,000 right now, and pre-K enrollment is roughly
20 60,000.

21 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. This is very
22 important. Um, most of the funding that existed to
23 support school budgets are drying out. The DOE
24 received one time federal funding for a range of
25 programs, which included \$135 million for hiring new

2 social workers and nurses, \$236 million for expanding
3 summer schools, and \$88 million for new pre-K seats
4 for special needs students. Amongst others, in
5 total, the city received more than \$7 billion in
6 COVID relief during the pandemic. How will the DOE
7 help school budgets compensate for these shortages
8 and spending? What will the DOE do about school
9 budgets experiencing reduction now?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So for next fiscal
11 year, we are glad to say we continue to have all of
12 those stimulus dollars for-- the stimulus dollars for
13 those specialized programs. So that includes being
14 able to continue to support expanded Summer Rising
15 this summer, continue to support expanded community
16 schools, restorative justice programming. So for
17 next school year, we still have those stimulus
18 dollars. The year after that, as you noted, they dry
19 up, and we have we will have a series of high
20 priorities that we need to find a way to work
21 together to fund.

22 In terms of school budgets for this coming year,
23 we are committing to hold schools harmless, i.e. to
24 ensure they see no cuts from last year to this year
25 in terms of their initial school allocations, which

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2 will come out very shortly by the end of this month.
3 We're still working to finalize those. We are able
4 to do that as well, in part because of those stimulus
5 dollars that we still have. So the mayor's exec--
6 executive-- preliminary budget actually included \$160
7 million in stimulus dollars that will go towards
8 holding those schools harmless from any reductions
9 and will work to ensure we meet that all the way.
10 But that is also dependent on those funds.

11 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. Do all school
12 buildings have a nurse? And there's a report, which
13 was official said they will hire 400 more full-time
14 nurses for K to 12 schools, seeking to fill vacancies
15 at 359 school buildings with additional hirings cover
16 absences and retirements.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So I need to check on
18 the exact report and numbers you're talking about.
19 We are still committed to a nurse in every building.
20 As you know, that includes both New York City public
21 schools nurses, DOHMH nurses, and then where we are
22 unable to fill those positions, we use contract
23 nurses for the rest of them who are a large portion
24 of our nurses at this point.

25

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2 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. Earlier, we
3 were talking about swimming. So-- And-- Does the
4 budget include enough funding to complete renovation
5 on those currently closed for-- for work. Like the
6 school-- I'm in the pools in the school building? Do
7 we have funding for that?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: It's a good question.
9 And part of that is that some of the larger
10 enhancements actually come through our colleagues at
11 the School Construction Authority. So let us get
12 back to you on-- I don't believe the current budget
13 between us and them commits to the renovations
14 necessary to bring all those pools back online. But
15 let us get back to you on specifics and what the
16 costs would be.

17 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. Mental health is
18 important. And I heard the money, but ELL advocates
19 have been calling for \$3 million. What's the status?

20 While you are you taking that, so I want to talk
21 about the school-- the cameras in the schools-- I
22 mean, in the bus for the for the young kids that are
23 in needs when we are finished.

24 So you want to answer that for me?

25

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Well, I want to find
3 out first: The \$3 million that you were talking
4 about for the English language learners, is that in
5 reference to the transfer schools?

6 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Okay, great. Yup.
8 So we've been working together with a superintendent
9 to build up our transfer school options. We want to
10 make sure there are transfer schools in every borough
11 that are available for our older newcomer students.

12 So we have taken existing transfer schools, and
13 transitioned some of them just standalone transfer--
14 bilingual education, transfer schools, and then we've
15 taken others and built in programs within them. And
16 we'll continue to do that actually. We've been very
17 fortunate to work alongside the Office of School
18 Design, to help make sure that we're actually
19 designing these schools to be sustainable, and to
20 continue to offer support to our students.

21 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. And by the
22 way, Summer Rising is a popular program. We need to
23 increase it because I have parents calling me all
24 over my district. So thank you, Chair. Thank you

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2 for being here. And you have allies here. That's
3 why you're so popular. [CHUCKLES]

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Final member questions from
5 Councilmember Farías.

6 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: They saved the best for
7 last y'all. Hi, everyone. I will try to be quick.

8 I just want to go back to some of the questions
9 that folks have just reminded me of to follow up.
10 Councilmember Gutiérrez asked about the EDC pass-
11 through that they are serving for you folks. Is
12 there any reason why the EDC was chosen to be the
13 pass-through pastor for those payments to our
14 contractors?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Basically, it was the
16 EDC that has the ability to stand things up quickly,
17 because they're a slightly different type of agency.
18 And it was the fastest way to be able to stand
19 something up. So we worked with them. It-- We
20 weren't able to do it under our own contracts.
21 Because basically what we are doing is paying people
22 beyond what their contracts-- beyond what they earned
23 under their contracts. And we determined we actually
24 couldn't do it, and then looked for the fastest way
25 to do it.

2 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: It's always great-- great
3 to get more clarity on an organization-- at a pseudo-
4 agency that I oversee. So thank you for that.

5 [LAUGHTER]

6 And then really quickly, on the phasing out of
7 the stimulus funds for the schools: Are we looking
8 at a more comprehensive plan on how to start
9 conversations even as early as yesterday with the
10 schools and the principals, and understanding that
11 that money is going to run out, we're not ever going
12 to see it again, and that things have to at some
13 point either come to head or be reconfigured?

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: There's-- You know, we're
15 going to we're going to need to have some real
16 serious conversations around-- around this. People
17 are thrilled even now, right, we're in a position
18 where we're able to hold schools harmless. And I'm
19 sure folks will be able to take that back to the
20 districts. It's a victory. But we're running out of
21 time on that, as well as lots of other initiatives.
22 I'm just taking a listing of all of the various
23 programs that were just cited just today, right?,
24 from the libraries, to the arts, to everything. And

2 everything is important. And we're not going to be able
3 to continue to fund stuff like we've been funding it.

4 So-- But we're going to need to be in real
5 conversation with you. So it's not so much "have we
6 developed a plan?" We have to work together.

7 Chair Joseph says it all the time: We are
8 partners, and we're going to have to deepen this
9 partnership now in preparation for the following year
10 and ways like we never have.

11 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Yeah.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: So we should all be at the
13 table together, really taking a look at what this is
14 going to look like as the stimulus dollars run out.

15 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: I look forward to holding
16 some convening where all of us can be at a table and
17 discuss this. I mean, I do also hope to see a larger
18 monetary commitment from the Administration. We know
19 we're not going to get this money back. Our schools,
20 whether they're in denial or not about it, should
21 know they're not going to see this money again. And
22 really, for me the misinformation around any of that
23 that happened last year and this year, potentially
24 going forward. And, so yes, it's exciting. We're,
25 you know, we have the-- the ability right now, with a

2 padded budget, with COVID stimulus funds to hold
3 schools harmless. That is not the reality going
4 forward. So I'm sorry, I know you wanted to chime
5 in.

6 MR. TREYGER: First, Councilmember, first let me
7 thank you for your leadership and getting something
8 great done for New York City kids with the discounted
9 rates on the ferries.

10 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you. Yay!

11 MR. TREYGER: That was a-- You got it done. I'm
12 very proud of you. Thank you. Thank you,
13 Councilmember.

14 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you.

15 MR. TREYGER: I also have to say, and this is a
16 point to go back to what Chair Brannan mentioned at
17 the start of the hearing about starting these very
18 important programs with temporary dollars.

19 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Mm-hmm.

20 MR. TREYGER: I was definitely a part of those
21 conversations. We asked the same questions of the
22 last Administration, who, you know, had-- Some folks
23 had a mentality about, "Well, if you build it, they
24 will come."

25 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Sure.

2 MR. TREYGER: And-- But saying it is one thing
3 implementing is another. But I can tell you this:
4 That in talks that we've had, for example, with
5 Washington, when it came to this matter of the
6 asylum-seeking crisis. We've asked our federal
7 partners about flexibility with stimulus dollars,
8 because it's their rules that say that we can't use
9 it beyond fiscal year 25. We've asked about that.
10 When we went to Albany, we reminded Albany that they--
11 - actually we're a creature of the state, they love
12 to remind us of that, right? We're a creature of the
13 state. They have more tools in their toolbox to
14 support cities like New York City than we do. So
15 they're going to have to be a big part of this
16 solution and answer, because a lot of their budget is
17 also funded through stimulus dollars.

18 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Sure.

19 MR. TREYGER: And so I couldn't agree with you
20 more that this is going to be a very, very big issue
21 moving forward. And of course, cities is where--
22 I've always said the city is where the rubber meets
23 the road. We are largely a reflection of federal and
24 state policies and budgets and actions or inactions.
25 So we're going to need a city state and federal

2 response to these issues. But I thank you so much
3 for raising this issue in both of the committees for
4 your leadership today. Thank you.

5 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you so much. And
6 you were kind and saying inactions, when you mean,
7 like federal and state failures that are trickling
8 down to us. But yes. And I just have two more
9 things.

10 I wanted to touch on, and I haven't. I know I've
11 previously spoken about this at the DOHMH hearing,
12 and I want to get your perspective as well, for our
13 contract-- for our DOE and DOH nurses and the
14 contracted nurses, and you just touched on it a
15 little bit with Councilmember Narcisse's question.

16 But I wanted to see-- Where's my questions now?
17 Okay. DOH nurses work the same hours with around a
18 \$20K difference than their DOE counterparts. There's
19 even an even bigger gap between DOH nurses, and the
20 contracted nurses, DOE nurses, and the contracted
21 nurses. Can you folks explain why and maybe how you
22 are looking at, beyond the contract negotiations kind
23 of meeting that at its head?

24

25

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I was waiting for
3 this question from you. Because I appreciate you
4 asked it last time.

5 Yes, I mean, you all know as well as we do.
6 There's different ways that looking at what the
7 actual salary gap is. But there is absolutely a
8 salary gap between DOHMH nurses who are DC 37, New
9 York City public schools nurses who are UFT members,
10 and then our contracted nurses who are paid more than
11 either, this is true, and for-- over whom we don't
12 have the same quality confidence and controls in that
13 particular case. So that is a bit of the challenge.

14 Obviously, the DC 37 contract negotiations are
15 now closed. So that did not substantially change,
16 sort of, the challenge ahead of us.

17 We are working incredibly closely with DOHMH on--
18 on sort of a set of different things. One is equity
19 bonuses to try and ensure nurses get in and then are
20 incentivized to stay in schools, because part of what
21 we see is just churn, right? So if New York City
22 Public Schools nurse leaves, a DOHMH nurse then
23 applies for that position, because it's a better job
24 and that just leaves a gap over here. So part of
25 what's addressing the issue is just a retention

2 issue: How do we keep people where they are so that
3 gap doesn't grow. So working on things like equity
4 bonuses. Also working behind the scenes with DOHMH
5 and OMB to ensure where we can be funding nurses
6 through the New York City Public Schools package. We
7 are continuing to do so. And those are the types of
8 things but there is still this ongoing challenge for
9 sure.

10 COUNCILMEMBER FARIÁS: And the contracted nurses.
11 It's under the impression for me that they're being--
12 the COVID stimulus funds are also being utilized for
13 the contracted nurses, to pay for them. If that--
14 that money is running out, how are we going to
15 address that with the needs that we have in schools?
16 And is there a phase out happening of those
17 contracted nurses?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So they are being
19 paid partially with COVID stimulus dollars. Yes.
20 That's actually not enough to pay the full cost. But
21 there is that, and it fits into the same category of
22 the other programs we were talking about where this
23 is going to create a gap for us in the year after
24 next.

2 We are really working hard to minimize the cost
3 of those contracted nurses, not just for that reason,
4 just because we'd rather have staff nurses in our
5 schools, and that's the work we're doing. But right
6 now, it is another gap in our budget.

7 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, great. And then if
8 you can share any of the like vacancy numbers,
9 turnover numbers or anything like that, that would be
10 really great. And then I just have a request, and it
11 doesn't have to be answered now. It can be given on
12 the after this.

13 Do you folks have a breakdown of the schools with
14 and without crossing guards? And if there's an
15 anticipation on how with the PEGs that we're seeing,
16 with the headcount reductions that we're seeing for
17 the PD on-- on eliminating all of those positions,
18 how we're planning to connect that back to filling
19 the gap for the schools that-- either middle schools
20 and elementary schools that are asking for school
21 crossing guards.

22 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: So thank you. In the interest
23 of time, I'm not going to swear and again, Justin.

24 {LAUGHTER}

25 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's Chair--

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2 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Yes. Chair Justin. Right.
3 Yeah. The Chancellor is a friend to you. So as it
4 relates to the crossing guards, as you know, they are
5 employees of the NYPD. We work in-- We work in
6 lockstep with the NYPD to ensure that all of our
7 elementary schools do in fact, have a crossing guard.
8 As it relates to the shortfall is a tough position to
9 fill. I'm sure that you've heard that they're
10 advertising all over the place, and they are
11 enlisting the support of many to try to get those
12 positions filled for our schools. The NYPD has done
13 a great job of ensuring that if there's not a school
14 crossing guard in place, that there's an officer--

15 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: They can fill the gap.

16 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Yep. They are there to fill
17 the gap. As it relates to the future shortfalls: I'm
18 sorry, I can't answer that question for you, ma'am.
19 But if there are any particular schools that you know
20 of that is missing a crossing guard, please let us
21 know, so that we can help them ensure the safety of
22 our young people.

23 COUNCILMEMBER FARÍAS: Absolutely. Thank you so
24 much for answering my questions and staying with us
25 so late. Back to you, Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Last-- Last week,
3 when the commissioner of NYPD was here, we suggested
4 maybe you raise the pay of crossing guards. It is
5 historically low. And it hires mostly black and
6 brown women. So we need to raise that salary, given
7 living wages, and then you'll be able to recruit. I
8 think that's the start.

9 Thank you. I wanted to ask a few questions
10 around preschoolers with disability. What percentage
11 and how many preschoolers are still waiting for their
12 mandated services to begin? Because we know some of
13 them didn't have no speech, no physical therapy, no
14 special education teacher services at all. But what
15 is that looking like?

16 CHIEF FOTI: Chair, I need to get you that
17 number. But I know that we released the-- the latest
18 report, which showed a good number of students did
19 not receive the related services. So we are putting
20 a number of things in place--

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 9,800 of them went without
22 been mandated IEP. So-- So you see times that and
23 that's your Carter Cases already.

24 CHIEF FOTI: Thank you, Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We got to do better. How
3 has he DOE done any analysis of how many evaluators,
4 how many service providers the DOE will need to hire
5 to provide all preschoolers with disabilities with
6 their full mandate? What was the result? And what
7 would be the cost?

8 Christina, you're not going anywhere. This is
9 all you.

10 CHIEF FOTI: Hey Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hey!

12 CHIEF FOTI: You give me the hard ones. What was
13 the question how many providers do we need?

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many evaluators will you
15 need, service providers, will you need to hire for
16 preschoolers with disabilities, with their full
17 mandate, and what was the result, and what was the
18 cost? Did you--

19 CHIEF FOTI: Yeah. Well, we certainly have done
20 that analysis, and I can get it over to him as well.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Homework number two. How
22 can the city decrease DOE funding when it's not
23 meeting the legal obligations to students with
24 disabilities? I know in that area there was some
25 cuts, but I want to know: How can we ensure funding

2 is added to FY 24 budget, so preschoolers can receive
3 the evaluations, their mandated special education
4 teachers and services?

5 Now, the tough question, I'm sorry.

6 CHIEF FOTI: Um, other than saying that we
7 absolutely need to continue to invest in our
8 preschool students, Chair, obviously, we're going to
9 continue to come up with creative solutions to
10 provide these services. But it is important that we
11 get these services right from the start.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We do. And I will be
13 waiting for the answers to my three questions. I
14 will be sending them over.

15 What is the status of restorative justice funding
16 for schools-- for school this year? How has the
17 funding allocated for restorative justice been spent?
18 And how much of the funding had been spent? And
19 where specifically is the funding going? And what
20 are the plans for any remaining unspent funds?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So I can speak to the
22 top-line funding. And so there's both tax levy and
23 stimulus. Another-- Another stimulus problem. Both
24 tax levy and stimulus dollars going towards
25 restorative justice programming. We expect those

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2 both to continue for next year as well, both the tax
3 levy and the stimulus dollars. The year after next,
4 we will obviously have this-- that the tax levy will
5 be there, the stimulus will not. And I'll pull up
6 the exact dollars to one second. Mark, you want to
7 take the rest, and then I'll pull up the dollar
8 amounts.

9 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Yeah. Well, you're taking the
10 budget numbers?

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Mm-hmm.

12 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: You're taking the budget
13 numbers, okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Welcome back.

15 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: And go ahead with the second
16 part of the question.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How much of the funds have
18 been spent? Where-- um, that was-- what are the
19 plans for any remaining spent. That was for Emma.
20 What restorative justice supports are being provided
21 to schools this year and to how many schools?

22 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Yep. So the total number of
23 schools is approximately 900. A little bit more than
24 900. And those schools are at various stages in
25 terms of where they are. Some are doing it with

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2 great fidelity, and lots of staff are trained, while
3 others are still grasping the concept of restorative,
4 right? So they're all at different levels of the
5 training. About approximately 306 or so are doing it
6 sort of with greater fidelity, while others are
7 different stages of the entry-- entry level. As it
8 relates to how much is being spent at each school, we
9 can give you a breakdown of what that looks like with
10 staffing, and a number of trainings done up till this
11 point.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So you have 300 schools
13 doing it at fidelity. How about the other 600?

14 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: There's sort of a touch point.
15 Like there are different-- so the restorative
16 approach is one that has to be grasped by all, right?
17 The whole concept of restorative has to be accepted
18 by all. Some schools, you get full buy-in. Other
19 schools, you get sort of a touchpoint of the
20 restorative.

21 So the greatest number of schools are still at
22 sort of entry level, meaning staff are being trained.
23 They're still training young people to employ those--
24 those interventions. So they're all at different
25 levels. And we can give you a breakdown of where

2 each level-- where each school stands as far as those
3 levels go.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Any training for school
5 leaders in restorative justice?

6 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Oh, yeah, absolutely. There
7 is-- there's definitely training for school leaders
8 as well as teachers. And, um, surprisingly enough, I
9 mean, lots of people find-- find that this is not--
10 not a, a historical concept, if you will. But the
11 number of students that are trained are pretty
12 extensive, as well. And we also have students
13 employed to-- to continue to support the restorative
14 approach to school.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How about parents?

16 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Not many parents--

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I went to school in Queens,
18 Outward Bound. The parents were also trained in
19 restorative justice, because if the school is doing
20 one thing, and you go home and parents are doing
21 another thing, I think again -- I keep saying that,
22 and the Chancellor, and I think we agree on that --
23 this educational journey must include parents as
24 well. So I think restorative justice should also
25 have a component where they include parents.

2 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Some of the-- Some of the
3 schools have taken on that sort of responsibility
4 internally to incorporate the parents into the
5 overall restorative concept. We've-- Early on, we've
6 offered training to-- to parents, as well as through
7 our advocacy partners. So thank you for that
8 recommendation. We'll continue to move forward.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. Does the
10 administration have any plans to change how funding
11 for restorative practices are allocated?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So in terms of
13 funding for-- Thanks thanks for the moment to check.
14 In addition to the \$14 million in stimulus dollars
15 for this year, there's \$7 million preexisting and tax
16 levy dollars, and we expect to maintain both of those
17 allocations for next year, and then obviously
18 stimulus dollars are up.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Young people have come and
20 said many times that restorative justice practices
21 should be expanded in schools, and in slowly remove
22 school safety agents. Can we talk about that a
23 little bit, Mark?

24 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: So when you say that
25 restorative practices should be implemented and

2 school safety agents removed. They're sort of
3 separate and a part of each other, right? So when we
4 talk about the role of the school safety agents, all
5 right?, it's sort of run runs the gamut. The
6 restorative is really to get our young people, as
7 well as our adults to address discipline differently,
8 right?

9 The SSAs have a small role in the restorative
10 concept. They don't run circles, but they can
11 recommend that you know, circles be conducted when
12 harm has been caused, whether it's by an adult to a
13 student, or vice versa.

14 If you're asking for my opinion around-- around
15 that, I don't have an opinion on-- on that. I will
16 tell you that the-- the, the roles of the school
17 safety agents in our buildings will continue to say
18 that they are community partners in this respect.
19 And when working in lockstep with our schools, they
20 do an amazing job of keeping young people safe.
21 Restorative practices is just one-- one tool in the
22 belt, if you will, for our schools. It's not the--
23 It's not the-- the Silver Star, if you will, right?
24 It goes hand in hand with different initiatives that
25 we provide for our schools.

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: There's no silver star, right?
3 There's no-- So it's, it's a comprehensive approach.
4 And, and I will say, clearly, I believe in a holistic
5 approach, and listening to our kids, and they say a
6 wide range of things. Including some saying, "We
7 don't want any school safety officers." A lot of
8 them say, "We need more in our schools." So I stand
9 on record in full support of school safety agents who
10 are mostly black and brown women across New York
11 City, who I think play a very major role. Many of
12 you know, early in my career, I was a school safety
13 agent as well. And I know in good schools, the
14 important role that they play. And I will stand on
15 record in saying that all day.

16 In addition to that, we need a wide range of
17 other supports for our kids that we need to be fully
18 committed to trying to do as well. So it's not this
19 or that. It's this and that. And, and that's what
20 we're going to continue to try to support.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No, of course. One of the
22 questions I did ask last time that the Commissioner
23 was here: School safety agents, are they trained in
24 de-escalation? Are they also trained in restorative
25 justice in the-- in the school buildings. Because

2 that's one of the things. The students said, "I
3 would love to see more." They came here and they
4 testified, and our hearing was 13 hours. After you
5 left, we stayed here another eight hours putting it
6 in, talking to young people. They want to see more
7 guidance counselors and social workers in their
8 school buildings. So restorative justice and de-
9 escalation.

10 And now, I know that they have doubled the use of
11 coordination officers. Was that part of a decision
12 that you made, Mark, to double the YCOs in the
13 schools? And how do they work with school safety?
14 And how do they work with young people? We want to
15 know. They're in the building. What are they doing?

16 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: So-- So two-- three things
17 actually. One, you talked about school safety agents
18 being trained in restorative. During the pandemic,
19 we did a lot of remote training for-- for school
20 safety agents. It's one of the one of the ways by
21 which we sort of ate up that time that schools
22 weren't open. We did restorative justice by way of--
23 restorative justice training by way of Morningside
24 for school safety agents. So tons of agents have
25 been trained.

2 We thought important to train-- give school
3 safety agents yet another tool for their belt. And
4 we-- we've been training agents in therapeutic crisis
5 intervention, so that agents know how to respond when
6 the student is in crisis and needs to be de-escalated
7 along with our partners in the schools to provide
8 those services. As far as the YCOs go, obviously,
9 they are assigned through and employed through the
10 NYPD. We are asking that YCOs continue to work in
11 lockstep with our principles, not there for the
12 purposes of going into arrest young people. They are
13 our community partners. They are working on our safe
14 passage and our safe corridors. Principals are in
15 fact inviting them in to take part in school
16 celebrations.

17 When there are great things happening, we want to
18 make sure that the entire community is invited into
19 the school and not just inviting them when something
20 horrible is happening in school. So the increase of
21 YCOs-- I'm not sure what the actual number is right
22 now. But schools are asking for more presence
23 expressly on the exterior of the school as young
24 people transition to and from. We appreciate, Chief
25 Maddrey for assisting us in that respect.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: When-- When we bring in
3 these folks into the building do we include one
4 important voice. We usually have a taskforce or
5 advisory for everything. Have students created an
6 advisory, as groups have suggested, an advisory group
7 for students meeting with school safety to express
8 themselves? Because normally we walk into buildings,
9 we just see a group of folks. We have no idea what
10 they are, what role they play in the school building.
11 And we've had conversation with young people.

12 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: So one of the recommendations
13 that we've given to principals is to do an
14 introduction at the beginning of the year, not only
15 for all of our school safety agents for all the
16 supporting officers from the local precinct. One of
17 the things that the NYPD has recently done is they
18 reintroduced the school sergeant, so that every
19 sergeant is responsible for a cohort of schools and
20 they are responsible for meeting the principal,
21 introducing themselves to student leadership, and
22 having an opportunity to have students sort of ask
23 some of the hard questions: Where can you find when
24 there's problems? What are you here? How are you
25 here to support us? How can we contact you if we

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2 need help? This is one of the recommendations we
3 provided to principals as well as invite them to the
4 monthly safety committee meeting where there's a
5 student representative, during which we will talk
6 about all of the things safety and security as well
7 as upcoming events where we might need the additional
8 support.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And they can raise their--
10 they can let-- they can raise their concerns and
11 questions and all of that on behalf of their
12 students.

13 Okay. There'll be more to follow up. My
14 favorite-- One of one of my favorite stuff:
15 Transportation for students in foster care. How is
16 that looking this year? DOE website states students
17 in foster care grades K to 6 are eligible for bus
18 service or student MetroCard for the past year. I've
19 made it clear that students in foster care should
20 have a door-to-door transportation in order to create
21 stability.

22 When I'm tiered away from my mom or dad, I need
23 some-- school is the one place I feel safe.
24 Chancellor Banks, you always say that: School is the
25 one place we feel safe. Our foster students are

2 taken away from homes. They're placed with--
3 sometime not with KinGAP. Kin with GAP is usually a
4 family member. But if they're not placed with a
5 KinGAP, and they're placed with a stranger, the
6 school is their stable home. It is the one thing
7 they can relate to, they know that's theirs. How is
8 transportation? Has the city done any cost analysis
9 to see how funding-- how we could fund transportation
10 for our students in foster care, so they can stay in
11 their regular school?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Thank you for the
13 question, and truly deeply for the ongoing advocacy
14 on the issue. Because I deeply agree, as does our
15 transportation team that-- as does federal law, that
16 keeping a student where they are has to be a key
17 priority for their own well-being. And it is
18 unacceptable when the transportation is what gets in
19 the way. That being said, sometimes there is not a
20 bus route we can get them on quickly enough. And so
21 touched on this a little bit earlier, there are a few
22 different things we are working on. Some do come
23 with additional costs that we would be happy to
24 discuss with you further. So that is basically how
25 can we commit to within a certain amount of time, if

2 there is not a bus route available, we will work on
3 alternative transportation. That could be through
4 the foster agencies, where as noted earlier, we are
5 working hard to figure out how to pay them more
6 quickly, and actually how to clarify for them what
7 the policy is so they're clear upfront. We are also
8 looking at where rideshare can be a solution for
9 these students. If an agency isn't a solution, if
10 there isn't a bus available, and just to say at
11 rideshare that, of course, there is a cost associated
12 with that. But as has been raised, which is
13 absolutely right, rideshare also assumes you have a
14 grown up who can come with you. So also have started
15 to look at where are there alternative ways that we
16 could be paying for a chaperone or someone to go with
17 the student that would also have additional costs.

18 And just the last thing I would say sort of
19 bigger picture and longer term is whether there's
20 sort of the fundamental challenge for us as New York
21 City Public Schools is we use buses, and that's our
22 primary form of transportation. And actually
23 agencies can step in and do something else. And it's
24 possible ACS might be able to as well. So interested
25 in sort of looking at other more systemic

2 alternatives along the way that would also come with
3 costs. And so those are the things we're looking at.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And when we update and get
5 all that information, will the DOE's website will
6 reflect this guarantee for students in foster care?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes. We were
8 actually making some updates to the website as
9 recently as today, or yesterday, to make clear what
10 the timeline is by which if a student doesn't have a
11 bus assigned to them, that we'll start to look at
12 alternative modes of transportation, even if there
13 isn't a route coming online for them soon.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: At the last general welfare
15 hearing, agencies were complaining that they were not
16 reimbursed for transportation for students in foster
17 care. And this school year when the DOE didn't
18 provide bus services, they still were not reimbursed.
19 What-- What caused a delay and when can foster care
20 expect to be reimbursed? What's the timeline?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes. So we-- There's
22 absolutely a delay. It came in part from us figuring
23 out how to-- the right ways to make these payments,
24 frankly, between us, ACS, and the agencies. We have
25 now worked that out and have a process as of a couple

2 of weeks ago. And the week before last, started
3 reaching out to providers-- to agencies to actually
4 help them verify their costs. We're checking those
5 costs, and then get payments out the door. And this
6 is in the past couple of weeks.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you know-- Can you give
8 me a number? What's the total reimbursement owed for
9 expenses related to transportation for students in
10 foster care?

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I can't at this
12 moment, but we can definitely get back to you with
13 that. And part of what we're doing is verifying each
14 of those costs by agency, as well as part of the
15 process, now that we can pay them.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. We wanted to
17 find out-- We talked about Project Pivot. How will
18 we assess the outcome, coming from programs like
19 mine, the Project Pivot? How do we assess that, and
20 to see if it's working, if we need to move things
21 around?

22 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: So thank you. So as you know,
23 Project Pivot is a brand new-- a brand new initiative
24 just availed to schools. Early-- Early reports from
25 schools is that they're seeing some gains as it

2 relates to the reduction in all of the areas that we
3 pointed out. We are looking-- currently looking for
4 an evaluator for next year, as we continue to expand
5 and work through-- through more schools next year to
6 focus on. We're seeing-- We're hearing positive
7 results from principals. By the end of the year, we
8 should have a full analysis of what we look like
9 overall, for those who have chose chosen to go with
10 sort of the outside providers. Many-- many focus on
11 inside, right? And they have done different things.
12 As you know, Project Pivot is an initiative that
13 works well with restorative, and, you know, some of
14 the mediations and all of the-- all of the other
15 programs identified. So we'll be able to talk more
16 about the progress by the end of the academic school
17 year.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do you plan on
19 evaluating if it's working? Or if you have to tweak
20 it? Or-- probably get rid of it completely?

21 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Yeah. So we definitely did
22 survey-- a survey prior to students being serviced,
23 right? So we did a pre and post, alright? And we're
24 going to be able to-- to really give you a real

2 sense, or give us a real sense of the progress of the
3 program overall.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

5 All right. We have-- We have some questions,
6 we'll email over to you because we want responses.
7 Because some of-- some of you have homeworks. I just
8 want to give a quick little glow-- glowing grows to
9 the foster care unit. Thank you. Thank you.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I appreciate that.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, I really had tears in
12 my eyes, because you know how personal this is for
13 me. And these are the students unfortunately, when
14 they go through care, somehow they end up with
15 justice involved. And if we can give them the right
16 tools in their toolbox from the very beginning, we
17 can change that. So this meant a lot to me. When I
18 saw a provider today she was crying, to say for the
19 first time somebody actually answered her. Somebody
20 actually cared for our foster care kids. And that
21 meant a lot to me. That's why I fight so hard for
22 them. Because I have them.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And they are mine now. So I
25 want to make sure that the ones you have in the

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2 system continue to get the care that they need and
3 the love and the support, but we got to get it right.
4 So as always, you have homework, I'll be waiting for
5 my assignments. And you'll hear from me. I have
6 quite a few other stuff that I want to discuss
7 offline with you guys. Thank you so much,

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chancellor and your team,
9 thank you so much.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you. We appreciate you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: With this day 10 of
12 executive budget hearings is adjourned.

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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 06/09/2023