

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

And

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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May 8, 2023  
Start: 9:56 a.m.  
Recess: 4:28 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan  
Chairperson

Diana Ayala  
Chairperson

Robert F. Holden  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Charles Bannon  
Gale Brewer  
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers  
David M. Carr  
Amanda Farías

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

Kamillah Hanks  
Crystal Hudson  
Farah N. Louis  
Francisco Moya  
Chi A. Ossé  
Keith Powers  
Pierina Ana Sanchez  
Althea V. Stevens  
Marjorie Velázquez  
Nantasha M. Williams  
Julie Won  
Tiffany Cabán  
Linda Lee  
Lincoln Restler  
Kevin C. Riley  
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Sandy Nurse  
Vickie Paladino  
Kristin Richardson Jordan

Molly Park  
Commissioner of Department of Social Services

Jill Berry  
Department of Social Services First Deputy  
Commissioner

Lisa Fitzpatrick  
HRA Administrator

Joslyn Carter  
DHS Administrator

Ellen Levine  
DSS Chief Program Performance and Financial  
Management Officer

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

Jess Dannhauser  
ACS Commissioner

Winette Saunders  
First Deputy Commissioner ACS

Margaret Plentikoff  
Deputy Commissioner ACS

James Hendon  
Department of Veteran Services Commissioner

Jason Loughran  
Department of Veterans Services Assistant  
Commissioner

Paul Vallone  
Department of Veterans Services Deputy Commissioner  
of External Affairs

Glenda Garcia  
Department of Veterans Services Deputy Commissioner  
of Operations and General Counsel



1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE WITH COMMITTEE ON  
GENERAL WELFARE AND COMMITTEE ON VETERANS 5

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and  
3 welcome to the New York City Council hearing of the  
4 Committee on Finance jointly with General Welfare.  
5 At this time, can everyone please silence your cell  
6 phones? Written testimony can be emailed to  
7 testimony@council.nyc.gov. At this time and going  
8 forward, please no one approach the dais. Thank you  
9 for your cooperation. Chairs, we are ready to begin.

10 [gavel]

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good morning and  
12 welcome to the first hearing of the Fiscal 2024  
13 Executive Budget. I am Justin Brannan, Council  
14 Member, and I Chair the Committee on Finance. I'm  
15 pleased to be joined by Speaker Adrienne Adams, and  
16 my Co-Chair today Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, Chair  
17 of the Committee on General Welfare. We've been  
18 joined today thus far by Council Members Lee, Louis,  
19 Carr, Williams, Barron, Cabán, Schulman, and I  
20 believe Moya. Before we get started, I want to take  
21 a quick moment to thank the entire Council Finance  
22 Division Staff for their efforts preparing for these  
23 hearings, especially Julia Haramis, Austrid Chan, and  
24 Ross Goldstein for today's hearing, my Committee  
25 Counsel Mike Twomey, my Senior Advisor John Yedin,

2 and all the Finance Analysts and support staff behind  
3 the scenes who make it all work. We're here today to  
4 examine the Mayor's \$106.7 billion dollar Executive  
5 Budget for FY24 which would be an increase of \$4  
6 billion dollars from the Preliminary Budget released  
7 earlier this year. But before I go any further, I'm  
8 going to invite our Speaker Adrienne Adams to give  
9 her opening remarks.

10 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you so much, Mr.  
11 Chair, and good morning everyone. Thank you Chair  
12 Brannan and Deputy Speaker Ayala for holding today's  
13 Executive Budget hearing for the Committee on Finance  
14 and Committee on General Welfare. We will be  
15 examining the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2024 Executive  
16 Budget as it relates to the Human Resources  
17 Administration, or HRA, and the Department of  
18 Homeless Services, DHS. These agencies are among the  
19 most important that deliver essential services to New  
20 Yorkers. As the Council and members of this  
21 committee have spoken about repeatedly, agency  
22 performance has been strained by understaffing and  
23 continued budget reductions. Critical life-  
24 stabilizing programs like SNAP federal food  
25 assistance and rental housing vouchers are

2 administered by HRA. Yet, the agency has fallen  
3 behind in the ability to fulfil its obligation to  
4 provide these important services to New Yorkers.  
5 This has left far too many in our City without access  
6 to the support they rely on to avoid food insecurity  
7 and homelessness. It is clear that we are far beyond  
8 the notion that reductions to the agency's budget and  
9 operational support have not affected services. New  
10 Yorkers are experiencing the negative impacts of  
11 delayed services, and we must stem this reality with  
12 the right investments in the budget. HRA's Fiscal  
13 Year 24 Executive Budget is \$11 billion dollars which  
14 is over \$300 million dollars more than what was  
15 proposed for the Agency and the Mayor's Fiscal Year  
16 24 Preliminary Plan and approximately \$300 million  
17 dollars less than its Fiscal Year 23 Adopted Budget.  
18 The Agency's budgeted headcount in the Mayor's Fiscal  
19 Year 24 Executive Budget is 890 fulltime positions  
20 less than the Fiscal Year 23 Adopted Budget. The  
21 Council has prioritized ensuring the City budget  
22 adequately invest in HRA's operations and programs so  
23 they can effectively and efficiently deliver for our  
24 city and for its residents. When SNAP Food  
25 Assistance applications are slow to be processed, New

1  
2 Yorkers go hungry. When CityFHEPS housing vouchers  
3 are not delivered on time, tenants face eviction, and  
4 those who rely on vouchers to transition into  
5 permanent housing remain in shelters longer than  
6 necessary, limiting available space in the system.  
7 New Yorkers lives are at stake, and the City cannot  
8 afford to continue blocking people from the resources  
9 they need because of agency underperformance that  
10 results from a lack of capacity. At a time when  
11 homelessness has reached record levels, DHS is  
12 crucial to the City's response. Nearly 78,000 people  
13 are currently in our shelter system, including over  
14 25,000 children. This does not include the many  
15 people in non-DHS shelters who are seeking asylum in  
16 the United States and have arrived in New York City.  
17 We recognize the challenges that the increased  
18 population of unhoused people has presented for the  
19 agency and city. It is critical that our homeless  
20 services investments and policies adequately help  
21 people in our system succeed and transition out to  
22 permanent housing. DHS' Fiscal Year 24 Executive  
23 Budget is \$4.1 billion dollars which is \$1.8 billion  
24 dollars more than proposed in the Fiscal Year 24  
25 Preliminary Budget and \$1.7 billion dollars more than



1 the agency's Fiscal Year 23 Adopted Budget. The  
2 majority of this increase is the result of the City's  
3 response to increased numbers of people seeking  
4 asylum who lack housing. While we expect to receive  
5 increased funding from the state budget to support  
6 the City response, we need greater federal funding  
7 that has currently been made available. The  
8 Executive Budget's funding reduction for shelter  
9 providers at this critical moment has raised concerns  
10 about the ability to provide adequate services, which  
11 we will examine in today's hearing. Recent reports  
12 have indicated that nearly three million New Yorkers,  
13 particularly in Black, Latino and immigrant  
14 communities are struggling to make ends meet. At a  
15 time when so many families are hurting and stretched  
16 thin, our city must act urgently to ensure the  
17 agencies that are our focus today can effectively  
18 fulfil their responsibilities. We cannot continue to  
19 allow city agencies to fall short in supporting New  
20 Yorkers. This Council is committed to the health,  
21 safety, and wellbeing of all communities across our  
22 city. We know that meeting the needs of all New  
23 Yorkers is contingent upon how we invest in essential  
24 human services within the budget, and New Yorkers  
25

1  
2 deserve our full support. I look forward to hearing  
3 from you, Commissioner Park, and welcome again, and  
4 all of your staff about how the agencies will address  
5 these grave concerns that impact everyday New Yorkers  
6 and the continued gaps in essential services. Thank  
7 you very much, and with that, I'll turn it back over  
8 to Finance Chair Brannan and Deputy Speaker Ayala.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Speaker  
10 Adams. Just to note, we've also been joined by  
11 Council Members Ossé, Stevens, Powers, and Hudson.  
12 Just to continue, in March of this year the Council  
13 began its role as advocates for the needs of New  
14 Yorkers with a series of hearings on the Mayor's FY23  
15 Preliminary Budget. Over the month, the committees  
16 examined the proposals in the Mayor's Plan,  
17 questioned the presumptions underlying them and put  
18 forward a response that accounts for the challenges  
19 ahead while investing our resources in the key  
20 services that will support New Yorkers. Today, we  
21 start the next stage of the process by examining the  
22 Mayor's Executive Budget beginning with the  
23 Department of Social Services covering the Human  
24 Resources Administration and the Department of  
25 Homeless Services. I also would like to welcome DSS

Commissioner Molly Park and her team.

Congratulations on your recent appointment and thank you for joining us today to answer our questions.

HRA's projected FY24 budget of \$11 billion dollars represents 10.3 percent of the Administration's

proposed FY24 budget in the Executive Plan. This

represents an increase of \$320.4 million or three

percent from the \$10.7 billion dollars budgeted-- for

\$10.7 billion budgeted in the Administration's FY34

Prelim. The net increase comes from several actions,

most significantly, a \$266.3 million dollar increase

in Medicaid payments rolled from FY23 to 24, \$35

million dollars added for collective bargaining

agreements, and \$28.7 million dollars added for

asylum-seeker response efforts. As well, HRA's

projections in the Executive Plan reflect a reduction

in agency headcount of 537 positions since adoption

of the FY23 budget. DHS' projected FY24 budget of

\$4.1 billion represents a 3.8 percent of the

Administration's proposed FY24 budget in the

Executive Plan. This represents an increase of 1.8

billion dollars or 75.3 percent from the \$2.3 billion

budgeted in the Administration's Prelim Plan. The

net increase is almost entirely due to the additional

2 of \$1.8 billion dollars for DHS' asylum-seeker  
3 response expenses. DHS' projections in the Executive  
4 Plan reflect a reduction in agency headcount of 60  
5 positions since adoption of the FY23 budget. There  
6 are a great many topics which the Speaker, myself,  
7 and my Co-Chair Diana Ayala and our colleagues will  
8 be seeking answers on. My questions will run towards  
9 funding of the Subway Safety Plan, the COVID  
10 isolation hotels, the community food connection, and  
11 hotel contracts for the asylees. Even in so-called  
12 normal times, the size of your respective budgets  
13 requires detailed oversight, and right now is far  
14 from normal, and the City needs to be sure that your  
15 agencies especially are equipped for the year ahead.  
16 At the First Preliminary Budget hearing this year, I  
17 stress the need to invest in our resources so our  
18 fellow New Yorkers are meaningfully and actively  
19 supported as they build their lives, because this  
20 stability affords the economic activity necessary to  
21 meet our challenges on the strongest footing. All of  
22 this remains true. We have what we need both to meet  
23 New Yorker's needs as well as to save for days ahead.  
24 Both must be done to preserve our economy's  
25 durability and rebuild into a city that truly works

2 for everyone. I now want to turn to my Co-Chair for  
3 this hearing, Deputy Speaker Ayala, for her opening  
4 statement.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you, Chair  
6 Brannan. Good morning everyone. I am Deputy Speaker  
7 Diana Ayala, Chair of the General Welfare Committee.  
8 Thank you for joining us this morning for the Fiscal  
9 2024 Executive Budget hearing for the General Welfare  
10 Committee held jointly with the Finance Committee.  
11 The City's proposed Fiscal 2024 Executive Budget  
12 totals \$106.7 billion of which over \$15 billion or  
13 over 14 percent fund the Department of Social  
14 Services encompassing the Human Service  
15 Administration and the Department of Homeless  
16 Services. DSS serves the most vulnerable populations  
17 in the City, sheltering the homeless and improving  
18 the economic wellbeing of those facing poverty.  
19 These services are more vital now than ever, given  
20 the record high shelter census and the economic  
21 challenges faced by low-income city residents. In  
22 addition to several new needs and other adjustments,  
23 the Executive Plan includes PEGS and savings programs  
24 totaling \$36.2 million for DHS and \$50.1 million for  
25 HRA in Fiscal Year 2024. It concerns me that we are

1 cutting the budget for homeless and social services  
2 at a time of record high need. I am particularly  
3 concerned about PEGS that will cut contracted  
4 providers' funding and reduce employment program  
5 slots. Additionally, I am concerned about the impact  
6 of the state takeover of Medicaid FMAP [sic] savings,  
7 which is estimated to cost the City of \$343 million  
8 each year when fully implemented. Council's budget  
9 response made it clear that protecting housing  
10 opportunities, bolstering the social safety net, and  
11 serving our most vulnerable residents are some of the  
12 Council's top priorities. I was glad to the see  
13 Administration added funding for source of income  
14 discrimination staff at CCHR, CityFHEPS vouchers in  
15 Fiscal Year 2023, and to ensure families and children  
16 have the infrastructure needed for telehealth. I am  
17 however, disappointed to see that the Executive Plan  
18 did not include funding for our client services,  
19 staffing, and system improvements for benefit  
20 programs, a COLA for human service workers,  
21 improvements in the PATH intake process for families  
22 and children, a baseline budget increase for rental  
23 increase, an expansion of Fair Fares, the  
24 legislatively required prevailing wage increase for  
25

2 DHS shelter security, legislation requiring mental  
3 health practitioners for families with children in  
4 shelters, a baseline increase for HASA emergency  
5 funding, housing, or the Right to Counsel program.  
6 While the City has truly stepped up with its response  
7 efforts to serve asylum-seekers over the last year,  
8 the escalating costs and how they are budgeted are an  
9 area of concern to the Council. The cost estimates  
10 from the Administration have risen multiple times.  
11 Little federal funding has been secured, and the  
12 support included in the state budget is far below the  
13 extent that the City expects to incur, leaving the  
14 City to shoulder much of the cost. With an average  
15 shelter stay for all populations at well over a year,  
16 the City needs to prioritize moving long-term shelter  
17 residents out of shelter and into permanent housing  
18 which will allow it to better serve the recently  
19 arrived asylum-seekers. I remain concerned about the  
20 high level of vacancy rates at HRA, the slow pace in  
21 hiring, and the extensive benefits processing  
22 backlogs and vital safety net programs including cash  
23 assistance, SNAP, and rental assistance. The Agency  
24 needs to comprehensively-- needs comprehensive  
25 planning and a clear path forward on how it will

2 address the staffing and processing issues, and  
3 prioritize permanent housing solutions such as rental  
4 assistance vouchers over the long-term use of costly  
5 shelters. I would like to thank the General Welfare  
6 Committee for their work in putting this hearing  
7 together today, Julia Haramis Unit Head, Aliya Ali  
8 Unit Head, Aminta Kilawan Senior Counsel, and David  
9 Romeo Counsel. I would also like to thank my Deputy  
10 Chief of Staff Elsie Encarnacion, and the Director of  
11 Communications Malek Al-Shammary, and now  
12 Commissioner Park, Counsel will swear you in.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair.  
14 We've also been joined by Council Members Riley and  
15 Velázquez. I'm not going to turn it over to my  
16 Committee Counsel Mike Toome to swear in the  
17 witnesses for their testimony today.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Please  
19 raise your right hands. Do you affirm that your  
20 testimony will be truthful to the best of your  
21 knowledge, information, and belief, and you will  
22 honestly and faithfully answer Council Member's  
23 questions? Commissioner Molly Park? Jill Berry?  
24 Ellen Levine? Joslyn Carter, Lisa Fitzpatrick? Thank  
25 you. You may begin.



2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you. Good  
3 morning. I would like to thank Speaker Adams, Deputy  
4 Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan and the Members of the  
5 General Welfare and Finance committees for holding  
6 today's hearing and for the opportunity to testify  
7 about the Department of Social Services, Human  
8 Resources Administration, and Department of Homeless  
9 Services Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget. My name  
10 is Molly Wasow Park. I am the Commissioner of the  
11 New York City Department of Social Services which is  
12 made up of the Human Resources Administration or HRA,  
13 and the Department of Homeless Services, DHS. In my  
14 capacity as Commissioner I look forward to working to  
15 further serve the anti-poverty mission of the  
16 Department of Social Services. I am joined by DSS  
17 First Deputy Commissioner Jill Berry, HRA  
18 Administrator Lisa Fitzpatrick, DHS Administrator  
19 Joslyn Carter, and DSS Chief Program Performance and  
20 Financial Management Officer Ellen Levine. Every  
21 day, DSS supports New Yorkers while also  
22 strengthening communities throughout the City. DSS  
23 uplifts vulnerable New Yorkers and links them to  
24 programs and services that help them more fully  
25 participate in the vibrant life of our city. The

1 hard work and dedication of DSS front line staff and  
2 providers makes a real difference in the lives of  
3 millions of New Yorkers and I cannot thank them  
4 enough. As the largest municipal social service  
5 agency in the nation, DSS HRA helps approximately  
6 three million New Yorkers each year. At DSS our  
7 mission is to fight poverty and income inequality.  
8 We do this through providing essential state and  
9 federal benefits and services that are specific and  
10 unique to New York City. Cash assistance, the  
11 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP,  
12 Medicaid, the Home Energy Assistance Program,  
13 subsidized housing and rental assistance, Fair Fares  
14 transit discount, anti-eviction legal services, and  
15 many additional benefits and program are supports in  
16 our toolkit for helping New Yorkers. Our work to  
17 prevent homeless, address unsheltered homelessness  
18 and provide shelter to those who need it is a part of  
19 our legal, and more importantly, moral commitment to  
20 our fellow New Yorkers. I will first address the  
21 Executive Budget as it relates to DSS HRA. As of the  
22 Executive Plan, the FY23 DSS HRA forecast is \$11.7  
23 billion dollars of which \$8.9 billion is city funds,  
24 and 12,486 positions of which 9,799 are city-funded.  
25

1  
2 The FY24 plan is \$11 billion of which \$8.7 billion is  
3 city funds, and 12,132 positions of which 9,458 are  
4 city-funded. In the Executive Plan, the DSS HRA  
5 budget increased in both city and total funds in both  
6 Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024 relative to the January  
7 Plan. There was a net increase of \$363 million in  
8 total funds and \$208 million in city funds in FY23  
9 and a net increase of \$320 million in total funds and  
10 \$334 million in city funds in Fiscal Year 24. The  
11 major new needs and adjustments in the DSS HRA budget  
12 include additional funding of \$3 million in FY23,  
13 \$5.3 million in FY24, and \$10.2 million in FY25 to  
14 provide a total of \$12 million this year and \$10  
15 million in the following two years for the Benefits  
16 Access Initiative which supports 39 community-based  
17 organizations connecting New Yorkers to benefits and  
18 services at HRA and other agencies. Additional  
19 funding in FY23 through FY25 for asylum-seeker  
20 services in HRA including Navigation Center, legal  
21 and interpretation services, a total of \$25 million  
22 this year and \$28.7 million in FY24 will support  
23 these services in the Agency. \$14 million was added  
24 in FY24 and in the out-years for master lease  
25 contracts that provide permanent housing and light-

1 touch services for families and individuals exiting  
2 the shelter system. In addition, \$250,000 was added  
3 to provide master lease housing for single-parent  
4 households. As Mayor Adams outlined and OMB Director  
5 Jiha testified in March, responding to economic head  
6 winds and fiscal uncertainty has real consequences  
7 for the New York City budget. We approach the  
8 Executive Budget requests for savings carefully and  
9 mindfully. I am pleased to say that we've been able  
10 to find efficiencies and savings that we believe are  
11 achievable with minimal impact on services to  
12 clients. Our savings did not reduce headcount, and  
13 DSS continues to prioritize hiring front line staff  
14 to deliver critical services. The DSS HRA City  
15 Savings totaling \$38 million in FY24 and \$47.4  
16 million in FY25 include the following initiatives:  
17 consolidation of contracts providing assessment  
18 tracking and case management of clients engaged in  
19 substance use programs outside the agency will save  
20 \$9 million dollars in FY 2024 and out. Contract  
21 providers and programs throughout the Agency will be  
22 provided flexibility to shift funding within their  
23 budgets to attract, incentivize and retain quality  
24 staff, producing efficiency savings of \$3 million  
25

1  
2 dollars in 2024 and beyond. Re-estimate of the  
3 subsidized JTP employment programs in the Parks  
4 Department and in DCAS and Sanitation will produce  
5 savings of \$9 million dollars in 2023 and \$8.9  
6 million in 2024 and beyond. Participants in these  
7 programs will be served by other HRA employment  
8 programs. A re-estimate of fringe benefit revenue  
9 will provide annual savings of \$18.5 million in 2025  
10 and beyond. DHS client placements in HPD are space  
11 units subsidized through housing development  
12 financing will reduce annual HRA costs by \$2.7  
13 million, and accruals from the phase-in of work  
14 requirements caused during the COVID-19 health  
15 emergency will produce savings of \$8.6 million in  
16 2024 in HRA employment-related services, primarily  
17 client transportation. Turning to DHS, the Executive  
18 Plan forecast is \$3.5 billion of which \$2.2 billion  
19 is city funds and 1,952 positions. The FY24 plan is  
20 \$4.1 billion of which \$2.7 billion is city funds and  
21 1,923 positions. In partnership with a network of  
22 service providers, over 95 percent of the DHS budget  
23 is allocated for direct and contracted shelter intake  
24 and street outreach services. The Executive Plan  
25 budget increased in city in total funds in both FY23

1 and FY24 compared to the January Plan. There was a  
2 net increase of \$479 million in total funds of-- \$515  
3 million in city funds in FY23 and a net increase of  
4 \$1.8 billion in total funds, \$1.2 billion in city  
5 funds in FY24. Nearly the entire increase in both  
6 years was related to funding added to the shelter  
7 budget for costs related to asylum-seekers. This  
8 unprecedented increase to the DHS budget is due  
9 primarily to the \$1.78 billion in total funds and  
10 \$1.2 billion in city funds added in FY24 for the  
11 continued cost of sheltering asylum-seekers. As a  
12 result, total projected cost for DHS shelter and  
13 intake increased to \$3.1 billion in FY23 and \$3.7  
14 billion in FY24 as of the Executive Budget. We  
15 prioritize ensuring that DHS savings avoid impacting  
16 our client services or our headcount. Instead, we  
17 are providing contracted providers and programs  
18 throughout the agency with the flexibility to shift  
19 funding with their budgets to attract, incentivize  
20 and retain quality staff producing efficiency savings  
21 of \$36.2 million, \$29 million in city funds in 2024  
22 and beyond. Asylum-seekers are a key issue facing  
23 our city today, and DSS has played a pivotal role in  
24 serving them. The Adams Administration's whole of  
25

1  
2 government approach has created partnerships between  
3 DSS and the Department of Education, Health +  
4 Hospitals, the Department of Health and Mental  
5 Hygiene, New York City Emergency Management, the  
6 Department of Housing Preservation and Development,  
7 the Administration for Children's Services, the  
8 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and with other  
9 agencies to live up to our humanitarian obligations.  
10 We've also benefitted from the partnership of  
11 providers and community organizations who saw the  
12 need to assist and quickly mobilized whether through  
13 cold weather gear drives during the winter, opening  
14 shelters, or helping meet our new New Yorkers at the  
15 Port Authority bus terminal. Our collective efforts  
16 have provided crucial human-centered supports in a  
17 moment of profound crisis. Our capacity to provide  
18 shelter, healthcare and other services to asylum-  
19 seekers, many of whom who have made perilous journey,  
20 says a lot about who New Yorkers are, our core  
21 values, and the fundamental rights we stand for. I  
22 echo Mayor Adams' call for a comprehensive federal  
23 response to this crisis, a human approach that  
24 respects the journeys of asylum-seekers, and supports  
25 our work to help them. At the time of the

1 Preliminary Budget I reported that there were 21,841  
2 asylum-seekers residing in DHS shelters and that DSS  
3 had opened 94 emergency shelters since the spring of  
4 2022. Our real time response to the crisis continues  
5 with 28,301 asylum-seekers residing in DHS shelters  
6 as of May 4<sup>th</sup>, and we have now opened-- my testimony  
7 says 122, but it is actually 126 emergency shelters  
8 since the spring of 2022. Since we last spoke about  
9 this in March, we have added more than 28 shelters.  
10 In March, Mayor Adams released, "The Road Forward, a  
11 Blueprint to Address the New York City Asylum-seeker  
12 Crisis." That blueprint offers a fuller description  
13 on the need for federal mobilization in response to  
14 this crisis impacting New York City and other  
15 jurisdictions throughout the United States. "The  
16 Road Forward" presents a policy pathway that meets  
17 the moment we are facing offering policy  
18 recommendations like an expedited Right to Work  
19 policy, a deceleration of the federal-- a  
20 declaration, excuse me, of federal emergency to  
21 unlock additional funding, and changing the  
22 classification of asylum-seekers to release resources  
23 and assistance. This moment represents both a crisis  
24 and an opportunity to demonstrate our compassion, our  
25



1 values, and to simply treat the most vulnerable the  
2 way we would want to be treated. At the state level,  
3 DSS welcomes key provisions of the state Fiscal Year  
4 2023-24 budget that recognizes significant challenges  
5 New Yorkers continue to face. We recognize the \$1  
6 billion dollars in state funding that will assist us  
7 in addressing the fiscal crisis the influx of asylum-  
8 seekers has created. We will continue to advocate  
9 for state and federal government to be proactive  
10 partners to do more to assist with the migrant  
11 crisis. We ask our partners across government to take  
12 budgetary and policy steps to alleviate the burden on  
13 New York City and other areas of the country in  
14 providing shelter and other humanitarian aid to  
15 migrants who have fled violence and despair for a  
16 better life in this country. While we have  
17 acknowledged the challenges and the financial  
18 implications for the City cannot be understated. We  
19 are also tremendously proud of our staff, our  
20 providers, and our partners throughout the City.  
21 Together over the past year we have worked tirelessly  
22 to make sure that the asylum-seekers coming to us for  
23 help have received shelter and support provided with  
24 the care and compassion that guide our mission. At  
25

1  
2 the same time we have continued to provide the core  
3 services on which so many New Yorkers depend. We  
4 appreciate the opportunity to testify today and we  
5 welcome any questions that you may have. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,  
7 Commissioner. I'm now going to give it to our  
8 Speaker for some questions. We've also been joined  
9 by Council Members Brewer, Hanks, and Sanchez.

10 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you very much,  
11 Chair Brannan, and again, welcome and congratulations  
12 on your appointment, Molly. Congratulations.

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you.

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: I'm going to go ahead and  
15 jump into questioning regarding the hot topic on the  
16 news lately, and that is the mayoral announcement on  
17 Friday to move asylum-seekers upstate. So let's go  
18 ahead and get that out of the way and on the rec--  
19 well, maybe not out of the way, given my colleagues'  
20 questions as well. But as we know, on Friday the  
21 Mayor announced a new program to move asylum-seekers  
22 to temporary shelters outside of the City, and we'd  
23 like some clarity on the plan. I specifically would  
24 like to know exactly when this plan was conceived,  
25

2 and how it will work, how much it costs, and who will  
3 be paying for it?

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Speaker.  
5 Absolutely. I mentioned in my testimony, the  
6 response to the asylum-seekers has really been a  
7 whole of government response. So, DSS is leading the  
8 126 emergency shelters that I mentioned in my  
9 testimony. The upstate effort is really a reflection  
10 of the fact that this has put overwhelming pressure  
11 on DSS and on the City as a whole. We are occupying  
12 at this point a large share of hotels in New York  
13 City and that we need to look for strategies beyond--  
14 that go beyond the City borders. The funding for  
15 that particular program is going to run through the  
16 HPD budget. So I'm going to defer to them on  
17 specific questions about funding, but we are-- as a  
18 city we are looking at all of our options because  
19 this has become an overwhelming issue for the City of  
20 New York and requires this, as I say, whole of  
21 government approach.

22 SPEAKER ADAMS: I'd like to know also,  
23 given all of the news that we're getting by the  
24 minute, actually, what was the communication like  
25 between the Administration and other jurisdictions

2 that will be receiving asylum-seekers? And what was  
3 the response to that communication compared to what  
4 we are seeing and hearing on the news?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, again, there was  
6 communication-- this involved multiple levels of  
7 government and multiple agencies. I can tell you  
8 that I reached out to my counterparts in the two  
9 counties that where hotels have been identified. I  
10 think there are concerns. I do want to really make  
11 it very clear for this body and for the city as a  
12 whole, right, this is not an abdication of city  
13 responsibility, right? The City-- this is a proposal  
14 where the City is continuing to cover the cost of  
15 this work that we have thought very carefully about  
16 how we are providing services to asylum-seekers who  
17 might be placed out of the City. So where other--  
18 other communities, other level-- other governments  
19 across the country have responded to this crisis by  
20 just shipping people in various levels of political  
21 stunts. This is an attempt by New York City to look  
22 for opportunities that go beyond the physical  
23 boundaries of New York City but without relinquishing  
24 our responsibility to serve those individuals.

2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Do-- does the leadership  
3 in other jurisdictions, as we sit here today, do they  
4 actually have a choice in whether or not to receive  
5 the asylum-seekers from New York City?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: There's clearly--  
7 thank you Speaker. There's clearly a lot of  
8 differences of opinion on that. My understanding is  
9 no, but I think this is playing out in real time, so  
10 I think we're all going to see how that works.

11 SPEAKER ADAMS: Are there other cities,  
12 other areas upstate or beyond that the Administration  
13 is currently looking at to receive asylum-seekers?

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: We are looking at all  
15 of our options. This has become, as I have testified  
16 already, an overwhelming issue for the City as the  
17 public health emergency ends later this week. We  
18 have been told that we should expect the numbers to  
19 go higher. New York-- there are jurisdictions all  
20 over the country that has said I'm sorry, we're full  
21 -- have shut their doors. So, at this point, we are  
22 looking at all of our options. Nothing is off the  
23 table.

2 SPEAKER ADAMS: in looking at the  
3 expense, what will the per diem cost, the per diem  
4 rate for the sites outside of the City be?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: Again, I'm going to  
6 have to defer to my colleagues at HPD on that.

7 SPEAKER ADAMS: Are we looking at only  
8 adult men, single adult men, or would other asylum-  
9 seekers be considered at this time?

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: At this point, the  
11 two site that have been identified are focused first  
12 single adult men, but this is a very rapidly evolving  
13 situation and we are not taking any options off the  
14 table at this point.

15 SPEAKER ADAMS: And how many people is  
16 the City expecting to move out of city shelters?

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: I believe it is  
18 several hundred, but again, I'm going to defer to my  
19 colleagues at HPD for the specifics.

20 SPEAKER ADAMS: Do we have a timeline for  
21 the program?

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: It is-- I believe we  
23 anticipate for it to launch this week, but again,  
24 this is a situation that is evolving rapidly on the  
25 ground.

2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Is it going to be  
3 voluntary?

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes.

5 SPEAKER ADAMS: And how will DHS decide  
6 who leaves the city and who stays?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, this is not just  
8 DHS. We are working also with our colleagues at H+H,  
9 a NYCEM who are administering the HERRCs. This will  
10 be an opportunity that is offered to individuals who  
11 are currently in the system, and as I said, it's  
12 voluntary.

13 SPEAKER ADAMS: Who's going to pay for  
14 the move?

15 COMMISSIONER PARK: The City is covering  
16 the entire cost of the program.

17 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, is the funding  
18 already budgeted then?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: I-- it is part of the  
20 overall forecast of funding that has been included in  
21 the Executive Plan.

22 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, so for which  
23 agencies are there units of appropriation, and what  
24 are the budget codes?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, I-- because HPD  
3 is the lead agency on this particular initiative, I'm  
4 going to have to defer to them on technical questions  
5 like that.

6 SPEAKER ADAMS: What services are we  
7 looking at to provide to those who participate in the  
8 program, and will legal services be provided,  
9 workforce development also?

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: It's comparable to  
11 what is being provided in the HERRCs and in DHS  
12 sites. There will be case work, access to legal  
13 assistance. There may be some workforce development,  
14 but as you know, most of the individuals who have  
15 come seeking asylum don't yet have work  
16 authorization.

17 SPEAKER ADAMS: Have the providers been  
18 selected already?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes, HPD has  
20 providers that they're working with.

21 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, was it an emergency  
22 contract or an RFP process?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: I'm going to defer to  
24 HPD on the specifics because they're the one actually  
25 managing that.



2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Do we know the criteria  
3 then for the providers that were selected?

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the lead on the  
5 program, the lead providing the services is a company  
6 called Daco [sic] that has worked closely with the  
7 City on some of the COVID response, but I am going to  
8 defer to HPD on the specifics, because they handle  
9 that.

10 SPEAKER ADAMS: Alright. In taking a look  
11 at the timeframe, we're hearing in the press and  
12 other places that four months has been the timeframe  
13 for the program. So, if the program is going to be  
14 up to four months of shelter, what happens to  
15 individuals after those four months expire?

16 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the intent is  
17 that during the four months of case work that there  
18 will be individual plans developed for those people  
19 to connect with communities that they might have  
20 elsewhere in the United States or to put them on the  
21 track for work authorization, variety of-- that will  
22 be households individual specific. If an individual  
23 come back to New York City and they are still in need  
24 of services, they will be eligible for DHS shelter.  
25

2 SPEAKER ADAMS: So, realistically, what  
3 is-- what is our estimation, let's say percentage of  
4 people that will successfully transition out at the  
5 end of four months?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: That's one I think  
7 we're going to have to assess. This is a program  
8 that is new. We've never tried anything like this  
9 before. It will serve people who-- some who've been  
10 in the system for longer periods of time who are  
11 closer to that work authorization date. People who  
12 are newer to the system are going to be a little bit  
13 further out. So, I think this is going to be  
14 something that we are going to have to just work  
15 closely on together and see how it goes.

16 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Alright, let's  
17 take a look at some more news. Let's talk about IBO.  
18 They've got a lower estimate for asylum-seekers,  
19 which we're finding out. IBO has done their own  
20 analysis of the cost of the asylum-seeker response  
21 and they've shared it with us, posted it online this  
22 morning for the world to see. IBO's projection is  
23 that in Fiscal Year 2023 the City will spend \$1.2  
24 billion dollars and in Fiscal Year 2024, the City  
25 will spend \$1.9 billion dollars for a total of \$3.1

1 billion dollars over the next two years. So this  
2 amount is \$1.2 billion dollars lower than the City's  
3 estimates, and IBO's also created a "worst case  
4 scenario" and that forecast is lower as well. That  
5 forecast is \$600 million dollars less than the City's  
6 projections over the next two years. So, can you  
7 explain how the City's projections were derived?  
8

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Speaker.

10 So, let me start by saying I've seen the report. We  
11 haven't had an opportunity to sit down with them on  
12 methodology, of course, given the timing, but a few  
13 concerns that I have just looking at. First of all,  
14 we just DSS have spent approximately \$555 million  
15 dollars this Fiscal Year alone. So, the costs are  
16 very high. And what we are seeing is a rising intake  
17 of asylum-seekers into our system. Just a couple of  
18 weeks ago we were seeing about \$200 people a day come  
19 in which is already a relatively high baseline. Last  
20 week, several days we exceeded \$500, getting close to  
21 \$600, and as I mentioned we have been told that when  
22 the public health emergency expires, that we should  
23 anticipate those numbers to go up substantially. So,  
24 I think there is-- there's a gap there. I think that  
25 maybe doesn't account for that, those rising costs.

1  
2 And then on the financial side, it's not clear to me  
3 whether or not the IBO has taken into account A, the  
4 fact the fact that there is a lag in spending from  
5 what they can see in FMS, right? We are going out.  
6 We are incurring costs in very real time. That is  
7 being done sometimes in advance of contract  
8 registration given the urgency of the need and  
9 certainly the way all of our contracts work providers  
10 need to invoice and then we reimburse them. So, to  
11 the extent that IBO is extrapolating from what they  
12 can see as liquidated funds in FMS, there's always  
13 going to be a lag built in there. And lastly, you  
14 know, we have fully exhausted all of the resource, or  
15 the normal resources of our system, right? We at  
16 DSS but also all the other agencies involved in this  
17 are out doing a host of emergency procurements,  
18 bringing in resources that are atypical to the  
19 system. Those incremental contracts tend to be more  
20 expensive than what we would have. So the cost at  
21 the beginning of this emergency even when they were  
22 high are lower than they will be going forward,  
23 because we are continuously stretching the bounds of  
24 what we can do. So, again, we will be talking  
25 further with the IBO. We will certainly dig in with

2 them on methodology, but those are some initial  
3 concerns that we have.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Can you tell us  
5 what assumptions the City is making about census  
6 growth?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yeah. I mean, we are  
8 assuming that census continues to grow on with rates  
9 that are relatively similar to what we have seen,  
10 accommodating some of the spikes that we have seen  
11 and building in some increase for the end of the  
12 public health emergency. We can certainly follow up  
13 with you on more specifics there.

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: And what assumptions is  
15 the City making about shelter exits?

16 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, thank you.  
17 Shelter exits are incredibly important to us on the--  
18 across the board, separate and apart from this  
19 particular asylum crisis. It's something that we  
20 focus on very closely at DHS. We do about 200  
21 subsidized placements a week now for our DHS clients  
22 and we are always looking at ways that we can push  
23 that number. You know, I can tell you we are on  
24 track for a record-breaking CityFHEPS year. We are  
25 rapidly pushing on the emergency housing vouchers

2 that came from the federal government. So permanent  
3 housing is a-- and affordable housing permanent  
4 housing is an incredibly important strategy for DHS  
5 as a whole. Most of the asylum-seekers are not  
6 eligible for any of our housing resources based on  
7 their immigration status. So, while permanent  
8 housing placements is a huge strategy for overall  
9 census management and for addressing the issues  
10 facing individuals and families in shelter, it is a  
11 lesser part of our response to the asylum-seeker  
12 crisis.

13 SPEAKER ADAMS: Can you tell us how the  
14 City's overall projections were derived?

15 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the-- thank you.  
16 the overall projections are derived by OMB, so I'm  
17 going to defer to them on most of the details, but  
18 again, it is-- at a high level it is based on looking  
19 at both actual spending and incurred expenses to-  
20 date, and relative to projections about how many  
21 additional individuals are going to come to the City  
22 and extrapolated from there, but we can certainly  
23 follow up with more details.

24 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. So the specifics  
25 you're saying are going to come from OMB?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes, but we will  
3 certainly happy to help with that.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. What are the per  
5 diem rates estimated for each population type?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. So, overall  
7 for our asylum sites our average per diem is \$256  
8 dollars. That-- I just want to be very clear. That  
9 is a DHS average per diem. It's not for asylum sites  
10 as a whole. For DHS more generally, the average per  
11 diem for single adults is \$136 dollars. For adult  
12 families it's \$172, and for families with children it  
13 is \$188 dollars. The primary difference between the  
14 standard numbers for DHS clients, and the asylum  
15 sites that I just mentioned is that the asylum sites  
16 are almost entirely in commercial hotels, and the  
17 real estate costs there are expensive.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: According to the PMMR,  
19 Fiscal 2022 per diem for regular DHS shelters were  
20 what you provided. Are the per diem rates estimated  
21 the same for each of the budgeted years, and if not,  
22 what are they projected to be for each year, and why  
23 would they differ?

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: I'm going-- I think  
25 I'm following the question. If I don't get it right,

1  
2 please, please let me know. So we do factor in some  
3 moderate gross in per diems. There are costs that  
4 increase. Typically, you know, for example rent goes  
5 up in-- on our-- on most of our contracts. Every  
6 three years we have built-in rent escalators, and  
7 there are other costs like that that increase. So we  
8 do see growth in per diems over time, incremental  
9 costs-- incremental shelters added are sometimes more  
10 expensive than the older real estate that we've had  
11 in our control for a longer period of time. The--  
12 and the asylum-seeker projections do include an  
13 escalator factor as well.

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. I just have a  
15 couple more questions and I'm going to turn it back  
16 over to the Chair, the Co-chairs. In the Executive  
17 Plan DHS added \$260 million dollars in Fiscal Year  
18 2023 for increased cost of non-asylum-seeker shelter  
19 operations. IBO has estimated that when accounting  
20 for non-asylum-seekers only, DHS is currently over  
21 budgeted for shelter operations in Fiscal Year 2023,  
22 and it's been since at least the preliminary plan.  
23 How is the \$260 million dollars calculated, and what  
24 was the breakdown by shelter population?



2 COMMISSIONER PARK: So I have not seen  
3 that IBO analysis. Certainly need to dig in on that,  
4 which we follow up with you on that. But I can assure  
5 that we work very closely with OMB to add funds to  
6 the DHS budget in real time to align with need, and  
7 we need that \$266 million to align with current  
8 costs. Part of the reason that the DHS budget is  
9 adjusted on a year-over-year basis was to make-- to  
10 avoid any over-funding. Again, I think potentially  
11 one of the discrepancies there is that there is often  
12 a lag between actual liquidations out of the City  
13 system, and when costs are incurred, given the nature  
14 of the reimbursement process.

15 SPEAKER ADAMS: So, would you consider  
16 that to be the cause for the increase in funding and  
17 trends of funding, the lag?

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: That may be the--  
19 that is potentially the difference between our  
20 analysis and IBO's. Again, because I-- I personally  
21 haven't seen that IBO analysis, I am just  
22 speculating. We will certainly dig in with them.  
23 What we are seeing is the cost of shelter arising and  
24 that-- excuse me, that we need that incremental  
25

2 funding in order to meet our cost and our provider's  
3 cost.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: How much is currently  
5 budgeted in Fiscal Year 2023 for non-asylum-seeker  
6 shelter cost, and how much has been spent to-date?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. Let me pull  
8 those numbers, just a minute. So, the-- for Fiscal  
9 Year 23 the overall budget, OTPS budget, is \$3.3  
10 billion dollars of which about a little over \$700  
11 million is asylum-specific. With respect to spending  
12 to-date, I'm going to need to get back to you on that  
13 one.

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. I'm going to go on  
15 to one more topic, and then I promise I'm going to  
16 let my colleagues jump in here. We spoke during the  
17 last hearing about notification for shelters, and you  
18 and I've had some communication as of late on that.  
19 So I wanted to come back to an issue that I brought  
20 up during our last budget hearing, the preliminary  
21 budget hearing. When new shelters have opened in my  
22 district and not receiving significant notice or  
23 information about the locations adequately far in  
24 advance, and as you know, in one instance I was  
25 informed the day after a site often-- it was actually

2 more than one instance. And during the preliminary  
3 hearing, you let us know that your team would reach  
4 out to local elected and Community Board to let us  
5 know when that happens a minimum of 30 days in  
6 advance of the conversation. But typically it is  
7 substantially more than that, and those were your  
8 words. We know, Commissioner, that that is  
9 certainly not the fact. You know, in my case, and I  
10 dare say some of my colleagues in this hearing this  
11 morning, and I'm sure that you will hear their  
12 accounts as well. After we spoke at the last  
13 hearing, the notification issue happened to me once  
14 again in April, and another notice was sent to my  
15 office that did not include clear information about  
16 the type of site or when it would be opening. Can  
17 you remind us once again of what the notification  
18 process should be for regular shelter sites?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Speaker.  
20 So, yeah, let me-- let me clarify and I apologize if  
21 I was not clear in the earlier hearing. We have--  
22 there's two very different processes for regular  
23 shelters and for emergency sites. So, for a regular  
24 shelter it is at least 30 days in advance, and I  
25 stand by my typically substantially more than that.

1 The-- for emergency shelters, it is a very different  
2 timeline. We have been doing them, you know, days,  
3 sometimes hours in-- simply because we are faced with  
4 this massive emergency. You know, I-- there is one  
5 notification that I did for a Council Member who's  
6 here today where it was-- literally I was texting at  
7 10:30 at night. Thank you, Council Member. That is  
8 not how I like to do it. It is not how the-- it's  
9 not what the agency stands for, but we are facing an  
10 unprecedented humanitarian emergency, and we are  
11 really responding in the real time. So, we will  
12 absolutely commit to continue to improve the quality  
13 of the notifications to make sure that we are  
14 providing as clear information as we possibly can.  
15 They-- for the emergency sites, it is going to be a  
16 very narrow window because we are, as I say, opening  
17 in real time. For the regular pipeline sites, it  
18 will be-- it will be at least that 30-day, and I can  
19 assure you typically much longer than that. Our  
20 number of notifications for regular sites has been  
21 quite small relative to the emergency pipeline  
22 because the asylum-seekers have been so all-  
23 consuming.  
24  
25

2 SPEAKER ADAMS: I think that's what I as  
3 going to ask. As far as in your perception right now  
4 and in real time, what is perhaps the percentage of  
5 regular shelter sites and compared to emergency sites  
6 and their notification, what are we looking at today?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: We do have a robust  
8 pipeline of regular emergency sites. I think overall  
9 it is-- there's about 90 sites in the pipeline, but  
10 those are going to open over the next several years.  
11 These are our, again, regular shelters. As compared  
12 to-- we've done 126 emergency sites since last June  
13 alone and are opening, you know, at this point  
14 sometimes two a day.

15 SPEAKER ADAMS: And just remind us once  
16 again, and this will be my final question, what  
17 information should be included in those notifications  
18 either for the regular or for the emergency site?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: For an emergency  
20 site, we are letting you know the population, the  
21 number of beds, people to be served, the provider and  
22 any information that we have on the timeframe. It is  
23 a fairly brief notification. You know, again I know  
24 we've spoken about some that were less than clear,  
25 and we are committed to working that that is-- the

1  
2 communication there improves. On the-- on a regular  
3 notification, it's going to be that same information  
4 but we can get more into the services that are going  
5 to be provided, anything that is unique about it.  
6 There is typically much more information about  
7 timeline, it is a longer time. We also start talking  
8 about community meetings and the community advisory  
9 board, things like that. So it is-- they are similar  
10 but the longer-- the regular shelters are a little  
11 bit more involved because they have that longer  
12 runway.

13 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Thank you very  
14 much, Commissioner. I'm going to turn it back into  
15 the hands of Chair Brannan.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Speaker.  
17 We've also been joined by Council Members Restler,  
18 Won, Farías, Brooks-Powers. Commissioner, I wanted  
19 to follow up on something that came up in the  
20 Speakers questioning. It's the first time I've heard  
21 HPD involved here. When was the decision to get them  
22 involved in the quarter-backing of asylees?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
24 Member. As I've testified both today and at other  
25 hearings around the asylum-seekers, this a whole of

1  
2 government response. There are, you know, probably a  
3 dozen agencies at this point who are involved in  
4 problem-solving, and that list grows on a daily basis  
5 because we are really looking for all the creative  
6 solutions that we can come up with. You know, I  
7 don't want to speak for my sister agency, but HPD  
8 does run a sheltering program so they have some  
9 expertise and they-- so we've been working with them.  
10 The City has been working together to-- as-- on  
11 problem solving here.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But, it's the first  
13 time I've heard them mentioned. They're really being  
14 brought in now to assist with the upstate aslyees?

15 COMMISSIONER PARK: They're also  
16 operating one of the HERRCs.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: One of the HERRCs.

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Something I  
20 picked up in your testimony that was concerning,  
21 obviously the PEGs and the agency vacancies are a  
22 huge concern for this council. You said you've been  
23 able to find efficiencies and savings that we believe  
24 are achievable with "minimal impact" on services to  
25 clients. Could you describe minimal impact?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. We-- thank  
3 you, Council Member. We understand that any time  
4 there are reductions that that is-- that it takes  
5 some time to absorb them and that I don't want to  
6 pretend that any reduction was achieved-- was arrived  
7 at lightly. We appreciate the very significant  
8 fiscal challenges that the City is facing, and so we  
9 tried to take a thoughtful and deliberate approach to  
10 absorbing reductions. We were looking for places  
11 where we could leverage technology to provide  
12 services more efficiently where we felt like the  
13 programs weren't performing in the way that we'd want  
14 it to in some places where there were changes in the  
15 way that service delivery is happening so that we  
16 could achieve some savings, and then with respect to  
17 the pass-throughs to the providers which is frankly  
18 one of the places where we really spent a lot of time  
19 thinking, paused very hard on that one, and did not  
20 enter that into that one lightly, but that  
21 recognizing the providers know their budgets very  
22 well, that they have individual ideas for identifying  
23 efficiencies, and that giving them more flexibility  
24 to reallocate across budget lines will-- can  
25 potentially help them in the long-run. We think that



2 overall the impact on clients will be relatively  
3 minor, again, understanding that none of this is  
4 taken lightly.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what would you  
6 say is more of a challenge, the PEGs or the staff  
7 vacancies?

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
9 Member. I don't know that I can rank them in that  
10 way. I think they're both real challenges, but I  
11 think on the staff vacancies we have been doing  
12 terrific work as an agency to address that. One of  
13 the statistics the team showed me recently that  
14 really stuck with me is between quarter four of  
15 calendar year 2022 and quarter one of calendar year  
16 of 2023. We had a 98 percent increase in our number  
17 of accepted offers. So it will-- you know, that will  
18 take a little bit before that is actually reflected  
19 in our vacancy rate, because we need to on-board  
20 people, but we are doing terrific work as a whole to  
21 bring people on board, and I'm really encouraged by  
22 that. I think we're starting to see that progress.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: In the meantime,  
24 how are you making due? Are people working over-  
25 time?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Our staff are doing  
3 tremendous work. Yes, we have a lot of people working  
4 over-time. I am very grateful to the agencies front  
5 line staff for all of the efforts they are doing. We  
6 are doing some strategic redeployments around the  
7 agency to make sure that we are getting people to the  
8 areas of top focus. We are investing in technology  
9 supports so that we are able to provide-- to do our  
10 work as efficiently as possible. It really is an all  
11 hands on deck effort to make sure that we are doing  
12 the best job that we can to provide core services.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Did any of those  
14 hirings you mentioned, are you hiring more  
15 eligibility specialists?

16 COMMISSIONER PARK: Absolutely. A large  
17 focus is on the cash and SNAP processors so that we  
18 can make sure that we are addressing that particular  
19 backlog. We are focused on those who are doing  
20 rental assistance, case workers for individuals with  
21 HIV/AIDS. So we are really prioritizing front line  
22 staff. Excuse me for a moment.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure. [inaudible]  
24 okay? We can take a-- we'll take a two-minute break.

25 [break]

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Everyone please  
3 settle. Everyone find a seat, please. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Commissioner,  
5 I certainly hope your colleague's okay.

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, and thank  
7 you for the flexibility. I appreciate it.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Of course, come on.  
9 Okay, I want to ask a bit about in the State's FY24  
10 budget, they propose a state take-over of the City's  
11 Affordable Care Act, the FMAP, the Federal Medicaid  
12 Assistance Percentage, meaning the State would keep  
13 the federal FMAP savings and no longer pass them  
14 through to localities that have been receiving them  
15 since the implementation of Medicaid expansion under  
16 the ACA. Have you been able to confirm with the  
17 state that this proposal is included in the final  
18 state budget, and if so, do you know how that's going  
19 to work?

20 COMMISSIONER PARK: To the best of our  
21 knowledge, yes, it is included in the state budget.  
22 I do-- it's phased in, excuse me, over three years.  
23 Beyond that there are still a lot of details still to  
24 be determined, but it is something that concerns us  
25 significantly as well.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Has the State  
4 indicated how much of that \$775-- \$74 million I  
5 believe is from the City?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: So overall, the total  
7 is about \$343 million for the City.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are we aware of any  
9 other changes being made under this plan that would  
10 impact the City budget?

11 COMMISSIONER PARK: Not at this time, but  
12 you know, this was passed relatively recently, and we  
13 are still certainly digesting all of the details.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And has HRA done an  
15 assessment and review of the cost implications of  
16 this proposal just yet?

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: Something that we are  
18 working with OMB on. Certainly if the full reduction  
19 goes through, it's a significant reduction to the  
20 City's budget, and we will have to work OMB to figure  
21 out how we absorb it.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But the number  
23 you're working with, at least back of the envelope,  
24 is about \$350 million?

25 COMMISSIONER PARK: Correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. The COVID-19  
3 hotel shelters anticipating the end of their FEMA  
4 funding with the public health emergency coming up  
5 later this week-- with the end of the public health  
6 emergency coming up later this week, it's our  
7 understanding that FEMA funding will no longer be  
8 able to support these-- the COVID-19 hotels, is that  
9 correct?

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: Again, we are still  
11 working with colleagues to make sure that we are  
12 fully understanding all of the implications, but I do  
13 want to just take a step back if I may. At this  
14 point, we have very little in the way of COVID  
15 hotels. I believe we have one site that we're using  
16 for isolation and quarantine. Obviously, hotels were  
17 a very large portion of our COVID response. We moved  
18 people-- most people back to congregate settings  
19 sometime ago. At various points in time we've had  
20 more isolation and quarantine space given where we  
21 are with respect to the trajectory of the disease  
22 right now. We have a relatively light need for that,  
23 so we have scaled that back substantially.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So you're saying  
3 there's only one hotel shelter left that handles  
4 COVID patients?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: Specifically, DHS  
6 isolation and quarantine sites, yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what's the final  
8 FY23 budget for those hotels?

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: We'll have to get  
10 back to you on that one.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Okay, in  
12 keeping with the hotel contracts for the asylees. So  
13 in January it was announced that the Administration  
14 entered a-- into a \$275 million dollar contract with  
15 the Hotel Association to house at least 5,000  
16 asylees. You indicated at the Preliminary Budget  
17 hearing that this arrangement would make contracting  
18 easier for emergency shelter providers, and we wanted  
19 to learn a bit more about that contract. So can you  
20 tell us how many emergency shelter locations are  
21 currently under that emergency contract?

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: It is approximately  
23 82, but let me confirm and we'll get back to you on  
24 that. Just to explain the contract a little bit more  
25 thoroughly, so we have this master contract with the

2 Hotel Association for New York. They are working  
3 with us to identify hotels to help to vet them, and  
4 then the funding for those hotels will flow through  
5 our contract with HANYC. This does-- this brings two  
6 benefits to-- two primary benefits to us. first of  
7 all, it helps share the workload of identifying  
8 vetting, making sure that, you know, hotel has  
9 appropriate certificate of occupancy, things like  
10 that. So this has put an enormous burden on our  
11 staff. So, having HANYC play some of that role is  
12 very helpful. Second of all, the fact that they are--  
13 - that we are flowing the funding through the-- for  
14 the hotels, which is a major piece of the cost of the  
15 emergency sites, flowing it through the HANYC  
16 contract rather than through individual providers  
17 means that individual providers don't have to be  
18 negotiating hotel rates. They don't have to be  
19 dealing with hotel payments. If there is-- you know,  
20 if they cash flow issue, if there is a hiccup in  
21 registration, if there is-- you know, or simply just  
22 the invoicing process, they aren't on the hook for  
23 the hotel component of that. So that's very-- it's  
24 helpful for both us and our providers.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are the per diem  
3 rates set at the same level for all the shelter  
4 locations?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, there's-- there  
6 are multiple components to the per diem. There's the  
7 [inaudible] for the emergency site-- for all sites,  
8 there's real estate costs for the emergency sites.  
9 That is typically a hotel rate which we negotiate out  
10 based-- they're fairly consistent varying's very  
11 slightly based on geography. And then there's the  
12 cost of other services, the social services, food,  
13 security, things like that. That will depend-- vary  
14 somewhat depending on population served, layout. A  
15 site with a lot of exits and entrances is going to  
16 need a little bit more security than a site that has,  
17 you know, two doors. So there is some variation, but  
18 they're relatively consistent for the emergency  
19 sites.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What is the per  
21 diem rate under the contract, the average rate?

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the average for  
23 the sanctuary sites is \$256 dollars. That is  
24 specifically for DHS emergency sites.  
25



2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Why would the--  
3 what I'm trying to understand, I guess, is why would  
4 there be such a fluctuation, you know, depending on  
5 the different agencies? Why would that change so  
6 much?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, I can speak  
8 specifically to DHS processes. I can't speak more  
9 detail to the HERRCs, because I'm not in the weeds on  
10 that in the same way, but I think we have different--  
11 as we are responding to the emergency, we are  
12 bringing different tools to the table. DHS has a  
13 history obviously of operating shelter and working  
14 with shelter providers. So, our staffing has largely  
15 been provider-based. We are absolutely using temp  
16 contracts. We are using the National Guard. We are  
17 using agency volunteers working overtime because this  
18 is such an enormous challenge, but we are largely  
19 following our traditional shelter model of using not-  
20 for-profit providers. In some of the other sites  
21 which are both substantially larger and also fully  
22 emergency response, don't have the same exact  
23 precedent to follow. It's different kinds of  
24 staffing models, things like that have led to some  
25 variation in cost. Again, I can't speak to the

1  
2 specifics on the HERRCs, but I think the-- what I  
3 would take as the-- sort of a bottom line takeaway is  
4 that emergency response is just tremendously  
5 expensive. This is as I mentioned when we were  
6 talking about the IBO report. As we reach the-- as  
7 we exhaust our normal tools and everything we do has  
8 to be an emergency procurement for resources that are  
9 not normally part of our system, those incremental  
10 costs go up.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And is the  
12 emergency asylee per diem rate different than the per  
13 diem rate for the typical DHS shelter?

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes. That's-- it's  
15 higher than a typical DHS shelter. That is largely  
16 driven by real estate costs. Most of the emergency  
17 sites are in hotels where we're paying a per-night  
18 room, negotiated room rate. We're not paying, you  
19 know, what any of us would pay if we were just  
20 booking a hotel room, but it is still relatively  
21 expensive. As compared to our typical shelters where  
22 we have either a nine or 30-year contract so that the  
23 real estate costs are contained somewhat that way.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And for something  
3 like the upstate proposed shelters that HPD is  
4 handling, what would the per diem rate be there?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: I'm going to have to  
6 defer to my HPD colleagues on that.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I mean--  
8 yeah. So, we're being told-- we haven't seen this  
9 letter, and I guess you can confirm or deny, but  
10 we're being told that a letter was sent out basically  
11 to all agencies asking to explore if there's any  
12 space in any City building that could potentially be  
13 used for asylees, is that true?

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes, Council Member.  
15 As I've talked about, this really is a whole of  
16 government response. We are looking at all of the  
17 tools that we have in our tool box and making sure  
18 that we're using really-- making effective use of  
19 City real estate is an important part of that.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. So, there  
21 was a story about the old police academy facility on  
22 20<sup>th</sup> Street where several migrant families with  
23 children were housed in the former NYPD training  
24 facility over the weekend, and now there's an article  
25 saying that this was in apparent violation of

2 longstanding rules prohibiting the City from  
3 sheltering kids in congregate settings. So I guess  
4 what we're trying to understand is completely  
5 appreciating the emergency of the situation, and we  
6 can't just create a perfect environment to house  
7 folks on emergency basis, but how is something like  
8 that being taken into consideration with an all hands  
9 on deck letter for the City to find-- I'm sure  
10 there's vacant city space. It doesn't mean that it's  
11 a place that we need-- that would make sense to house  
12 human beings.

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: Of course. So, two  
14 pieces there. Let me start by addressing the police  
15 academy. We are-- that is the site that the City is  
16 using as a emergency response. It is intended as  
17 essentially overflow space so that when we have  
18 spikes in the numbers that that is a place where  
19 people can be. It is not designed as a long-term  
20 placement for anybody. So,-- and we are coordinating  
21 closely with the other agencies so that we can ensure  
22 that we find placements for anybody who is there,  
23 whether they were-- are single adults or families  
24 with children. On the larger conversation about  
25 evaluating city spaces, it's-- the first step is to

2 identify places that might have potential. The  
3 second step is to evaluate and assess them and  
4 determine whether or not they actually can be made  
5 viable. That-- and you know, I have been through  
6 rounds of this already. There will be rounds to  
7 come. I can certainly assure you that not every  
8 spaces that is proposed can be made viable.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what are the  
10 costs? For something like the training facility,  
11 the NYPD training facility on 20<sup>th</sup> Street, what are  
12 the costs related to that? If it's not an outside  
13 vendor, what's the cost? What's the City charging  
14 itself?

15 COMMISSIONER PARK: I'm going to have to  
16 defer on that one, both because that one is certainly  
17 not running through the DSS budget, but also this is  
18 something that we have stood up relatively recently  
19 and I think we are still assessing all of that.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So that particular  
21 one was run through which budget?

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: I anticipate that it  
23 will be through the NYCEM budget, but I do-- this is--  
24 - has been very much an emergency response, and there  
25 are still details to be resolved here.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I want to  
3 ask-- and I have a lot-- my Co-Chair and a lot of  
4 colleagues that have questions, but I want to ask  
5 about the community food connection. So, the HRA's  
6 Community Connection, CFC, it's formerly known as the  
7 EFAP, Emergency Food Assistance Program, it provides  
8 an array of essential food items to emergency food  
9 providers. In our budget response, the Council  
10 called on the Administration to increase and baseline  
11 the budget for the Community Food Connection program  
12 to \$60 million. Additionally, the Council has called  
13 on the CFC to engage in an outreach in education  
14 campaign to ensure that smaller community-based  
15 providers who especially those who have been  
16 operating since the onset of the pandemic are  
17 enrolled in the program. What we're seeing is  
18 there's a lot of emergency food pantries, whether  
19 they were-- you know, that popped up during COVID.  
20 Certainly, COVID might be in our rearview mirror, but  
21 the food need, food insecurity is absolutely still  
22 here. Has HRA made any changes to CFC in response to  
23 the Council's budget response, and if so, can you  
24 detail any of those changes?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, I'm going to  
3 start my response and then pass it over to my  
4 colleague Jill Berry. So we have robust funding in  
5 place through FY24. The budget does drop off in  
6 FY25. We're in conversations with OMB about that.  
7 There has been a steady increase in the number of  
8 food pantries and community kitchens that receive  
9 funding. It is currently at \$673 which is up from,  
10 you know, about \$550 just a few years ago. So, we  
11 have seen a steady increase. This is the only  
12 program among all of the different levels of  
13 government that fund emergency food use where the  
14 application is open year-round. So, providers can  
15 come to us at any point. But Jill, anything you want  
16 to add?

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Because the concern  
18 here is that if we all acknowledge that, you know,  
19 while COVID might be in the rearview mirror COVID  
20 food insecurity is certainly seemingly here to stay  
21 for the time being, but what we're seeing is the  
22 understanding is that the budget is a bit over \$55  
23 million for FY23 and 24, but then it drops to \$25  
24 million in FY25 which is half of what it is now.

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BERRY: Yeah,  
3 and as the Commissioner said, we're going to work  
4 closely with OMB to look at what the funding should  
5 be for FY25, but to address your question about what  
6 we're doing for some of the smaller pantries and  
7 making sure that pantries who maybe haven't  
8 traditionally been part of our program can access it.  
9 We gave a number of grants this year just recently.  
10 Some of them were specifically expansion funding.  
11 So, for two things-- one, to allow those smaller  
12 pantries who don't' currently receive CFC funding to  
13 partner with some larger organizations to start to  
14 build their capacity and also to have some more  
15 mobile operations to bring the larger pantries food  
16 and infrastructure to the smaller locations.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. What is the  
18 actual spending on CFC thus far in FY 23, can you  
19 tell me that?

20 COMMISSIONER PARK: We'll need to get  
21 back to you on that number.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And if CFC  
23 providers need more food, what is the process and the  
24 timeframe to get approval to order more food?

25



2 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, all the food  
3 budget was allocated to all the providers for the  
4 entire Fiscal Year. We recently conducted an  
5 exercise where we allocated. Some pantries were  
6 underspending. We did a reallocation to ship those  
7 funds around to make sure they're all spent, and  
8 we'll do the same exercise again later this month to  
9 make sure that all pantries who need food have access  
10 to food. We also have a rolling application, so we  
11 are constantly taking in new applications for new  
12 programs, and we have some funds set aside so that we  
13 can bring on new pantries on an ongoing basis.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But can a small  
15 local food pantry that might have been born have and  
16 have a mutual aid program apply and get funding from  
17 you guys?

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: Absolutely. We do  
19 require that pantries have some certain key criteria.  
20 It also includes you have to have funding from  
21 another source. We work closely with new pantries  
22 who are just coming on who maybe don't have any  
23 government funding. We work collaboratively with  
24 them and some of the state and other funding sources  
25 so that we can provide that funding at the same time

2 so that they can meet that requirement of having at  
3 least two sources of funding.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. My last  
5 question is going to speak to subway safety plan and  
6 some of the end of line services. The FY24 Executive  
7 Plan added an additional \$22 million in FY23 for the  
8 subway safety plan. Will these need be ongoing and  
9 if so, are we going to add the funding to the  
10 baseline?

11 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
12 Member. This is another one of the places where we  
13 work very closely with OMB to realign on a year-by-  
14 year basis to make sure that the budget matches needs  
15 and our commitments to providers. So we will  
16 continue to monitor that.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How much has been  
18 spent thus far?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: Again, I'm going to  
20 need to get back to you on that one.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: since the start of  
22 this Administration, how many new drop-in centers  
23 have opened?

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: One.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And where is that?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: It's on 14<sup>th</sup> Street in  
3 Manhattan.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how many beds  
5 are there?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: so, drop-in centers  
7 don't have beds, just--

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing] Sorry,  
9 I meant-- I'm talking the low barrier beds.

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: Oh, sorry, okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, sorry.

12 COMMISSIONER PARK: Different question.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: So we have opened  
15 since the start of this Administration I believe  
16 we've opened up about 500 low-barrier beds in  
17 different locations across the city.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. So, as far  
19 as end-of-line outreach services, I have an end-of-  
20 line station in my district, 95<sup>th</sup> Street in Bay Ridge  
21 on the R Line. The outreach that's being done there  
22 is really not working. There's still many  
23 unsheltered individuals congregating on the trains  
24 and in the station primarily before rush hour, 5:00-  
25 6:00 a.m. I haven't seen a big improvement in the

2 last year since this significant investment was made.

3 Could you provide an update just overall? Not, just-

4 - I don't necessarily about my district, but overall

5 how the end-of-line services and street outreach

6 efforts are going in end-of-line stations?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. Thank you for

8 that, Council-- question, Council Member. This is

9 some of the hardest work that we do. It takes a long

10 time. We are starting to see dividends from that

11 investment. We've had since the start of the end-of-

12 line engagement that was announced. We've had almost

13 318,000 engagements. We've had more than 4,600

14 clients check in to placements. That can be a

15 placement in shelter, safe haven, stabilization bed,

16 and we have about 1,300 who are still in those

17 placements. This is an effort that it-- with a

18 typical client, it can take many months, sometimes

19 hundreds of touch-points before an individual is

20 ready to come indoors. We-- it is very common for

21 somebody to come in and then exit and then come-- but

22 they might be more likely to come back the next time,

23 right? So it is-- it is something that because we're

24 talking about individuals who frankly have been

25 failed by every level of government and probably more

2 than once, what we see is that it's a real trust-  
3 building exercise that takes a very long time to do  
4 so. You know, absolutely there is still work to do,  
5 but we are seeing real progress from that work.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I'm going to  
7 hand it over to my Co-Chair, Deputy Speaker Diana  
8 Ayala.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I appreciate it,  
10 Chair Brannan. Commissioner, I hope that the  
11 colleague is doing better.

12 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is she okay?

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: I hope so. I believe  
15 so, but we'll--

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] I see  
17 the staff behind you shaking yes in the affirmative,  
18 so good. So in the Executive Budget Plan-- well, the  
19 plan included a baseline PEG on nonprofit provider  
20 contracts starting in Fiscal Year 2024. The PEG  
21 value is \$36.2 million annually for DHS and \$3  
22 million per year for HRA. OMB has indicated that  
23 providers must identify five percent savings in their  
24 contracted expenditures and in exchange will be  
25 permitted to use half of that amount for staff

1 retention. While providing additional flexibility  
2 for provider expenditures is important, it does not  
3 make sense to cut homeless and social services at a  
4 time of record need. Providers that I have spoken to  
5 do not believe that this program can be implemented  
6 without permanently reducing services. Is this  
7 concerning? You know, it is very concerning that the  
8 services may need to be cut when the census is at a  
9 record high and climbing. How would the  
10 implementation of this PEG work and how would the  
11 required savings be-- amount be calculated for each  
12 provider?  
13

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you for the  
15 question. Let me start by saying this was not a  
16 reduction that we took lightly. DHS in particular,  
17 as I testified earlier, overwhelmingly we spend our  
18 money on DHS staff and on contracted providers.  
19 There's virtually nothing else. When we-- and as you  
20 know, we took reductions in the agency headcount in  
21 January. So when we needed to participate in the  
22 executive PEG exercise, understanding the very  
23 significant fiscal challenges that the City is  
24 facing, we felt like we had to look to the providers.  
25 in the past, in previous years, when we have done

1 really targeted, you know, you will cut X, the  
2 feedback that we have gotten from providers is that  
3 they know their budgets better than we do, that they  
4 know their operations better than we do, and that it  
5 is more appropriate for them to have some flexibility  
6 on how they are going to actually achieve the  
7 savings. So that's what we looked to do here. The  
8 reduction that has been passed through to providers  
9 is two and a half percent, so substantially less than  
10 the full PEG amount of four percent. If providers  
11 choose to go beyond and identify additional savings,  
12 that is funding that they keep to reallocate within  
13 their budget so that they can have some additional  
14 flexibility. We are working on implementation plans  
15 now, consulting very closely with our internal  
16 finance team, and then-- and we'll be talking with  
17 providers as we develop those plans.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Has this ever  
20 happened before? Have we had a situation where  
21 providers were asked to make cuts to their budget?

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes, absolutely there  
23 have been situations where there have been reduction  
24 to provider contracts. I don't know that we've ever  
25

2 paired it with flexibility in exactly this way, but  
3 yes, it's not unprecedented.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, providers have  
5 indicated that at times they were part of the  
6 contract that have-- that were under-- that have  
7 underspending but that it's not because they don't  
8 have a real need for the funding. Rather, it is  
9 because the terms of the contract offer little  
10 flexibility and don't allow them to take much-needed  
11 budget adjustments. Why are contract terms so  
12 inflexible, and will providers be afforded any  
13 additional flexibility under this plan in addition to  
14 the ability to use the two and a half percent for  
15 staffing purposes.

16 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you. There are  
17 a couple of factors that i think shape our contracts.  
18 First of all, we are-- DHS in particular is a very  
19 heavily regulated space, right? So there are  
20 staffing ratios that are-- come to us from the state,  
21 so we always have to make sure and will continue to  
22 make sure that we are adhering to those staffing  
23 ratios. We also several years ago went through what  
24 we termed our model budget exercise where we tried to  
25 set up essentially template budgets for providers for



1  
2 different-- for shelters of different types. So, you  
3 know, there's-- not that we're comparing a single  
4 adult shelter to a families with children shelter,  
5 but that for all families with children that there's  
6 a certain level of consistency. We wanted to do that  
7 for a few reasons. It helped with provider  
8 retention, right, because you don't have an op-- you  
9 have less of an incentive for a staff person to be  
10 forum shopping and hopping from provider to provider  
11 but also, you know, knowing that, you know, a client  
12 is assigned to a given shelter based on, you know,  
13 who has vacancies on the day that they come in, plus  
14 some combination of their particular need. There's--  
15 we wanted to make sure that that, you know,  
16 essentially luck of the job process resulted in  
17 something that was consistent for everybody walking  
18 in the door. So, we do try and keep some level of  
19 consistency across the different shelter budgets.  
20 That being said, we've heard a lot of requests for  
21 flexibility, so this what we see here is an attempt  
22 to both adhere to the spirit of consistency across  
23 shelters while also recognizing some need for  
24 flexibility.

2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I'll tell you that  
3 I'm really concerned about this one, because I mean,  
4 two percent, two and a half percent seems like a very  
5 minimal amount, but for nonprofits that are already  
6 underpaid and understaffed and under-resourced, you  
7 know, it's significant. And we did see throughout  
8 the beginning of this crisis when we were touring.  
9 The Speaker and I actually toured Bellevue and we  
10 toured a couple of other locations as a results of  
11 complaints that we had been hearing from shelter  
12 providers and residents that they didn't have access  
13 to milk. They didn't have access to diapers. They  
14 didn't have access to food. If they did have access  
15 to food, the food was, you know, maybe like a very  
16 small, you know, meal, right, that of course abided  
17 by the calorie count, but people were still hungry  
18 and the providers didn't have, you know, the  
19 resources to give more. Whereas, AC-- sorry, whereas  
20 DHS had that flexibility within their budget, right?  
21 So we go to the PATH center and we have an abundance  
22 of diapers, and if you want a second or third milk,  
23 you know, you're obviously welcome to it, and if  
24 you're hungry and you want two or three, you know,  
25 packages of meals you can have those. It was a

1 really obvious difference between the nonprofit  
2 sector and what the City was able to provide. And I  
3 get the complexity of, you know, the situation, but I  
4 just wonder if it would have been more-- if it would  
5 have made more sense to try to renegotiate the  
6 contracts with the hotels that are charging pretty  
7 significant rates, and you know, allow the nonprofits  
8 to remain harmless.  
9

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
11 Member, for that feedback. I, you know, want to  
12 reiterate that this is not something we arrived at  
13 lightly. We understand the challenges that it  
14 presents. Just to respond to a couple of pieces  
15 there. With respect to the food, we have worked very  
16 closely with our providers to make sure that people  
17 have-- that there is adequate food. I was at one of  
18 the asylum sites recently and it was between meal  
19 times, but there was, you know, baskets of fruit and  
20 fridges full of sandwiches. There is food available  
21 for people when they need it and that is not going to  
22 change. with respect to the hotel rates, without  
23 getting-- without giving away secrets on the record,  
24 because it does help us with our negotiations, I can  
25 assure that we actually have been able to keep to

1  
2 quite competitive rates for our hotels, and they are-  
3 - while it is expensive relative to our typical real  
4 estate which is locked in at nine-year contracts, it  
5 is-- they are-- we're not paying full market rate  
6 hotel prices.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. I'll come back  
8 to that. If a provider does not have OTPS on the  
9 spending and does not have vacancies that they can  
10 eliminate without enrolled in legally mandated  
11 services, will nonprofits be required to do layoffs?

12 COMMISSIONER PARK: We're not looking at  
13 layoffs, and we will certainly work with providers to  
14 figure out how to implement the PEG or adjust  
15 accordingly.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And I'm sure this is  
17 more of an OMB question, but are you aware of any  
18 attempt to try to fast-track payment of contracts?  
19 Because one of the other issues that we're very well  
20 aware of is the fact that our nonprofit sectors, you  
21 know, usually not only, you know, underpaid but  
22 they're not getting their contracts in time and many  
23 of them are in financial crisis because they're  
24 taking loans left and right in order to be able to  
25 make payroll.

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yeah. Thank you. It  
3 is something that we are very focused on. First of  
4 all, making sure that provider contracts are  
5 registered promptly. We're working very closely  
6 between the providers, the DHS staff, the DSS at  
7 those office, all of the oversight agencies and the  
8 comptroller to push that. I can assure you that City  
9 Hall is very focused on making sure that FY24  
10 contracts are all in place where we're reporting out  
11 on a weekly basis there. And then with the invoicing  
12 process, we've done a lot of work to try and make  
13 sure that invoices go as smoothly as possible because  
14 even once a contract is registered, right, the-- all  
15 of the payment is done on a reimbursement basis. So,  
16 we are seeing, I think, at least on the margins some  
17 level of improvement. I think actually the increases  
18 for regular shelter budgets that we talked about  
19 earlier do play into that as well, because the third  
20 piece of making sure that we can pay providers  
21 promptly, right? We need to make sure the contract  
22 is registered. We need to process the invoice, and  
23 then there needs to be budget authority available to  
24 make the payment. So that is an important-- going to  
25 be an important piece as well.

2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, critical,  
3 critical, for many of our non-providers-- of our  
4 providers. Providers with unionized staff have  
5 expressed that they will not be able to meet this  
6 PEG. Collective bargaining agreements govern work  
7 rules including case load. So eliminating positions  
8 and reassigning work to others may not be an option.  
9 Additionally, because salaries must be consistent  
10 across programs and titles, and because vacancies and  
11 accruals can vary significantly within any one  
12 provider organization, adjusting pay for some and not  
13 others isn't an option. Has DC37 and other unions  
14 been made aware of this initiative and what was their  
15 response?

16 COMMISSIONER PARK: I have not spoken to  
17 DC37 about this. given that it is the provider's  
18 relationship with the union there, so not sure it  
19 would be necessarily appropriate for the agency to  
20 insert directly in that respect. But we will  
21 certainly work closely with any provider who has  
22 concerns, and make sure that we are implementing this  
23 in a way that it is appropriate.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I appreciate that.  
25 Thank you. It was reported in the New York Times

1  
2 yesterday that Jordan Neely, the man that-- the man  
3 in mental health crisis who was killed in the train  
4 last week, that Chair Brannan mentioned was on the  
5 DHS Top 50 list for unsheltered homeless individuals.  
6 This means that he was known to DHS and had contact  
7 with street outreach workers on several occasions.  
8 What exactly-- who maintains the Top 50 list and who  
9 has access to the list?

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: So let me-- thank you.  
11 Let me start by just stating first of all that what  
12 happened to Mr. Neely was a tragedy. My heart goes  
13 out to his family. I am not going to comment on his  
14 case or the situation on the record. I think it  
15 would be just inappropriate from a privacy  
16 standpoint. More generally, DHS works very closely  
17 with healthcare partners, outreach organizations, and  
18 others to focus on clients about whom we have  
19 particular concerns. it is a very-- it's essentially  
20 a case management tool where we are doing  
21 collaborative case managing to identify all the  
22 resources that we can bring to the table, but again,  
23 I'm not comfortable speaking more specifically about  
24 Mr. Neely's case.

2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I mean, we're not  
3 asking about any specifics regarding his case. I'm  
4 using him as an example. If an individual is on the  
5 list, right-- first of all, this is private?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: This is-- what  
7 essentially what we're talking about here is internal  
8 to agency and with the contracted outreach provider's  
9 intensive case conferencing, right? So, we're  
10 identi-- working together to identify individuals  
11 about whom we have particular concerns, and  
12 identifying all the resources that we can bring to  
13 the table, right? Who has healthcare resources that  
14 might be appropriate? Who has housing resources that  
15 might be appropriate, and how do we connect the  
16 client to those resources? It is-- it's very  
17 significantly because individuals' circumstances vary  
18 significantly. It's certainly not a published list.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. But if an  
20 individual is identified, any individual-- I'm  
21 identified, I'm on the top 50-- what does that mean?  
22 Who's contacting me? How quickly does that mean that  
23 I'm transitioning between, you know, living on the  
24 street? Who's identifying, you know, suitable  
25 housing?



2 COMMISSIONER PARK: The concept of the  
3 top 50 is a way for us to focus this interagency  
4 collaborative case management, and do it in a way  
5 that is meeting the needs of very, very high-need  
6 individuals. But those-- it's true for not just for  
7 those who have been identified for this particular  
8 form of collaborative case work, but for all of our  
9 clients. People are coming to DHS in moments of  
10 trauma with very unique client circumstances. So for  
11 particularly this group of very, very high-need  
12 clients, there is no formulaic pathway to stability,  
13 right? So for some people it might be via a  
14 healthcare route. For other people, direct connection  
15 to housing might be the right solution. We have--  
16 we see people, and again, I'm not speaking  
17 specifically about any case, but for who-- with  
18 really significant physical healthcare needs and what  
19 they actually need is a nursing home, and that might  
20 be the best option. So, I can't answer it because  
21 the intent here is really to do the most human-  
22 centered collaborative casework on very challenging  
23 cases.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And does that  
25 collaboration extend to, you know, outside of the

2 boundaries of DHS? Do you work with NYPD? Do you  
3 work with, you know, mental-- DHS-- Department of  
4 Health and Mental Hygiene? Do you work with Health +  
5 Hospitals? I mean, there's just so many-- I can go  
6 on and on and on.

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So many different  
9 agencies that, you know, unfortunately, you know,  
10 touch on this issue, and I've seen very little  
11 coordination. And I've shared this before, because  
12 I'm-- this case really bothers me because, you know,  
13 Jordan was-- is one of many individuals that  
14 unfortunately are, you know, on our streets, in our  
15 subway stations who are-- have not and will probably  
16 never receive the level of care that they need. We  
17 are in a desperate need of in-patient rehabilitation  
18 beds in New York State, in New York City, and the  
19 State has been very purposely moving away from that  
20 model for many years, and I think that they get off  
21 the hook a little too easily. Because I think that a  
22 lot of this, you know, if you look at the history,  
23 right, of the number of beds that we've lost  
24 throughout the years and the trajectory, right,  
25 leading up to, you know, the moment in time that

1 we're in, that there's a correlation there, and you  
2 know, I've-- I've had interactions with some of these  
3 agencies. You know, I had-- and I won't mention  
4 names either, you know, because I want to protect the  
5 integrity of the organization, but I've had  
6 interactions with a lot of these agencies that are  
7 contracted through DHS to provide services to  
8 individuals with mental health issues, and you know,  
9 the-- there isn't really the level of intense care  
10 planning at least in my opinion, my humble opinion  
11 that I think the situation sometimes, you know,  
12 merit, and I need to say that and get that, you know,  
13 really off my chest, because I haven't slept well in  
14 days and I don't know how anybody could, because this  
15 could have been avoided. And not only Jordan, but  
16 you know, people like Jordan. People forget that  
17 individuals with mental health issues, severe mental  
18 health issues are usually on the receiving end of the  
19 violence, but they do have the propensity to get, you  
20 know, violent too, and so I think about, you know,  
21 all of the-- the people, commuters right? People  
22 that are going to work, people that are minding their  
23 business that come-- you know, that have been hit  
24 over the head or pushed, you know, and you-- these  
25

1 things could have been avoided. They could have been  
2 avoided. And then what happens is that the support,  
3 you know, these poor people end up in jail because  
4 nobody treated them to begin with. Nobody offered  
5 them the services that they needed. That level of  
6 interagency, you know, coordination was not adequate,  
7 was not there at all, and now they end up at Rikers.  
8 You now, God forbid, you know, as in Mr. Neely's  
9 case, you know, deceased, and I just don't know how,  
10 you know, in this society, in a city that is so rich  
11 in services, that we're still, you know, allowing  
12 this to happen.

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
15 Member, for those sentiments. I certainly hear you.  
16 This Administration in particular is very committed  
17 to breaking down those silos. So we absolutely do  
18 have DHS, all the health agencies, the state  
19 increasingly-- so, OMH is also at the table, right?  
20 We are bringing all the resources together to work  
21 through this intense case coordination on particular  
22 cases. It is very much client-focused. So it is on  
23 specific individuals, because it really does require  
24 this intensive planning around and discussion of the  
25 needs of particular people, right? This isn't--

2 these people's lives are complex that they're not  
3 going to be fixed by a data match, right? So it is  
4 about getting the clinicians to the table to really  
5 think through about what individuals need. And there  
6 was an announcement just about a month ago that HUD  
7 has awarded us money to support this work, so this is  
8 something that we're going to be able to expand.  
9 Very pleased about that, because I do think that  
10 you're right. This interagency collaboration and  
11 looking about how we can bring all the resources to  
12 bear is an incredibly important part of serving  
13 clients with really complex and interconnected needs.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And I hope that that  
15 includes consulting with family members, because I--  
16 you know, when I look at all of the cases of recorded  
17 suicides at Rikers, cases like, you know, like Mr.  
18 Neely's, cases like, you know, my own brother the  
19 common denominator is we try to get them help. We try  
20 to get them help, and if you look at each individual  
21 case, you will see that they have come in contact  
22 with every single agency on the face of the earth,  
23 and they still fell through the cracks. So we're  
24 doing something fundamentally wrong, and until all of  
25 the stakeholders are at the table, we're not going to

2 get this right. And I just want to say to the  
3 Administration that words matter, and the way that we  
4 talk about unhoused individuals matter, and the way  
5 that, you know, we point them out and victimize them  
6 yet again because of their situation, that matters.  
7 We cannot be a city that, you know, is pointing the  
8 finger at the neediest, right, because we don't want  
9 to see it because it bothers us. These are people  
10 that need help, and we should be doing better. So  
11 shame on all of us. And that-- you know, and I  
12 include myself in that. Alright, I'm going to move  
13 on to a couple of questions regarding issues that  
14 were not addressed in the budget. The prevailing  
15 wage issue for the security, I mean, that was a law  
16 that was passed, and we still have not seen that--  
17 those funds baselined.

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: That is another place  
19 where we are coordinating with OMB to add funds on a  
20 year-by-year basis. So, fully implemented for FY23  
21 and we will adjust the budget going forward.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: But is there any  
23 intention to baseline these funds?  
24  
25

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: We're collaborating  
3 closely with OMB to adjust our budget as needed. I'm  
4 going to have to defer.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I mean, it's a law, so  
6 I don't-- you know. We add it every year. We could  
7 just add it to the budget because we're going to have  
8 to go there anyway. Provi-- the City's nonprofit  
9 Health and Human Service workers have been  
10 significantly underpaid for years, and this workforce  
11 is predominantly comprised of women and people of  
12 color. Has-- and that has kept the city afloat  
13 throughout the pandemic. The wages of these workers  
14 has remained stagnant despite the rising cost of  
15 living in the City. The Fiscal Year 2023 Adopted  
16 Plan included \$60 million in baseline funding for HHS  
17 workers. An allocation does not fully address the  
18 pay inequities in the sector. Additionally, I have  
19 heard from many providers that they have yet to  
20 receive last year's increase. How does DSS expect a  
21 nonprofit to continue to hire and retain staff when  
22 comparable city workers and private sector jobs pay  
23 better, and what is the delay in distributing last  
24 year's workforce enhancement?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
3 Member. We are-- we are rolling out the contract  
4 amendments to allow for the payments of those  
5 workforce enhancements. So that is steadily under  
6 way, but it did involve amending every single  
7 contract that we had. So that-- there was a non-  
8 trivial process there, but absolutely, the frontline  
9 workers are the backbone of what we do, and it is  
10 critical that we get those funds into provider's  
11 hands. So we are prioritizing that. With respect to  
12 a larger conversations about pay rates, I think that  
13 is something that can be discussed as part of the  
14 larger budget negotiations, but it's outside the  
15 scope of DSS specifically.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: DO you know what  
17 percentage of providers have already received any of  
18 this fund?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: We'll have to get back  
20 to you on that.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. On HRA, the  
22 Right to Counsel Law spearheaded by the Council  
23 provides access to free legal services to all tenants  
24 facing eviction proceedings, and is a key program to  
25 addressing housing stability in the City. Eviction



1 filings in the City increased significantly over the  
2 past year, as have the demand for Right to Counsel  
3 Services, but the program's contracted providers do  
4 not have the capacity to fully meet that current  
5 need. Additionally, on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Local  
6 Law 20 of 2023 was enacted extending full legal  
7 representation in evictions or terminations of a  
8 tenancy proceedings in Housing Court for any person  
9 who is 60 years of age or older. No funding has been  
10 added to the budget to support this expansion which  
11 has-- which will be effective in early Fiscal Year  
12 2024. In the budget response, the council called on  
13 the Administration to add \$70 million to the Right to  
14 Counsel to ensure that all eligible individuals can  
15 obtain legal services. Nothing was added to the  
16 executive plan. Without the additional funding, how  
17 does the City expect to meet the requirements of all  
18 Right to Counsel legislation, including the expansion  
19 to seniors and prevent increasing evictions and  
20 homelessness, which is much more costly to the City?

21  
22 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Deputy  
23 Speaker. We are incredibly proud of the Right to  
24 Counsel program. It is a flagship initiative of DSS.  
25 It's one that has been copied by jurisdictions all

2 over the country because we know it is a really  
3 important program. We're working really closely with  
4 OMB to realign our budget to make sure that the Right  
5 to Counsel program is fully funded for all of its  
6 obligations. As you note, it wasn't funded in the  
7 plan at this time, but we anticipate that we will be  
8 meeting all of our legal obligations next Fiscal  
9 Year.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Do you know  
11 what challenges providers have expressed with hiring,  
12 retention, pay parity, and other things?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, this is a  
14 challenging labor market. It's a challenging labor  
15 market I think for everybody for the for-profit  
16 sector, for not-for-profits, for government. It is  
17 something that we have heard from our legal service  
18 providers. What we have seen recently is that  
19 vacancy rates have been going down. We're working  
20 very closely with them to monitor that. We're-- and  
21 we're making adjustments as we go along. For  
22 example, we're rolling out a hotline so that more of  
23 the brief assistance can be handled through a  
24 centralized hotline, rather than take up on-the-  
25 ground attorney time. So we're looking for creative

1  
2 ways that we can work with our providers to maximize  
3 resources.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Are you aware of any  
5 providers that have stopped taking new cases, even if  
6 it was just temporarily?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: No, as-- to the best  
8 of our knowledge, no providers have stopped fully  
9 taking new cases. The balance between full  
10 representation and brief advices may have shifted in  
11 certain ways. And so that's something that we're  
12 monitoring really closely with.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Are you sure? I  
14 mean, I feel like I've heard here from some of our  
15 providers on the record that they have-- they're not  
16 able to take on any new clients, because they don't  
17 have the workforce to meet the demand.

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: Again, I think there  
19 is-- has been some shifts between what is brief  
20 advice versus full representation, and so that may be  
21 part of the discrepancy, but we will certainly follow  
22 up with our providers and ensure that what I just said  
23 is accurate.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, I'm going to  
25 just try to move and jump around here a little bit so

3 that I can, allow for our colleagues to ask  
4 questions. But regarding the-- okay. So this is a  
5 DHS question on mental health. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023,  
6 Local Law 35 of 2023 was enacted requiring DHS  
7 contractor shelters to hire mental health  
8 professionals to provide on-site or telehealth mental  
9 health services at families with children shelters.  
10 DHS is required to maintain a ratio of at least one  
11 fulltime mental health professional for up to every  
12 50 families with children. What will the new need  
13 for funding support specifically, and when do we-- do  
14 we expect this to be baselined in this year's budget?

15 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, we're still  
16 working on our implementation plans for this. Most  
17 of our sites have social-- most of our families with  
18 children sites have social workers on site, and so  
19 there may be ways that we can meet the required  
20 ratios without substantial new needs, but we are  
21 doing a side by side assessment so that we can ensure  
22 that we are in compliance with the law.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And what type  
24 of mental health services will families be able to  
25 access and how will they be funded?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: the mental health  
3 services will vary depending on individual families'  
4 needs. It could include in-person care. It could  
5 include telehealth. It may be oriented towards  
6 children. It may be oriented towards parents. The  
7 requirements of the bill are fairly broad, so our  
8 intent is to make sure that each family is getting  
9 connected to the services that is most applicable for  
10 that.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: In the Adopted Plan,  
12 \$14 million in city funding was added in Fiscal Year  
13 23 for a benefit access pilot program. In the  
14 Preliminary Plan, \$4.9 million was rolled from Fiscal  
15 Year 23 go Fiscal Year 24. In the Executive plan, a  
16 portion of the funding rolled into the Preliminary  
17 Plan was rolled back to Fiscal Year 2023 again.  
18 Additionally, just over \$10 million was added in  
19 Fiscal Year 2024 and 25, and \$2.7 million was added  
20 to Fiscal Year 26. What is the portion being rolled  
21 back to Fiscal Year 23 and why does the funding  
22 decline so much in Fiscal Year 26?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, we can probably  
24 get back to you with some of the details, but I think  
25 there was a small rollback of funding to 23 because

2 we're actually incurring some cost this year on  
3 launching the project. So we just need to align the  
4 budget with the actual spending. The-- I believe  
5 that the budget stays relatively constant but the  
6 amounts added varied, because what had been put in  
7 the budget previously also varied. So, the goal here  
8 is to create a relatively steady funding stream, but  
9 we can get back to you with more detail on that.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And the  
11 funding of this program was not baselined. It is  
12 expected to continue in the out-years, and if so,  
13 when will funding be added?

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: I believe it is  
15 funded through 2026. And that will, you know, to the  
16 extent that we need that the out-year budget is still  
17 being developed beyond that.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And of the \$14  
19 million that has been allocated so far, how much of  
20 that is budgeted to CBOs?

21 COMMISSIONER PARK: I believe the  
22 majority about \$10 million dollars is specifically  
23 for the CBOs.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Do you-- is it  
25 possible so that you could provide to this body a

1  
2 breakdown of what the remains of the budget is  
3 allocated toward [inaudible]

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. We'll follow  
5 up on that.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. Will the City  
7 be able to claim any state or federal revenue to  
8 support this initiative?

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: At time it is-- I  
10 believe it is fully city funded. If there are  
11 opportunities for claiming we will certainly take  
12 advantage of the.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And my final  
14 question, the Executive Plan-- the Executive Plan  
15 includes an additional \$279.9 million in Fiscal Year  
16 23 comprised of city, state, and federal funds to  
17 support the increased need for benefit payments to  
18 cash assistance clients. How is this amount  
19 calculated and what trends is HRA seeing in its cash  
20 assistance case load?

21 COMMISSIONER PARK: thank you. we are  
22 seeing very rapid increases in the number of-- in the  
23 cash assistance case load just to start whit that.  
24 Hold on, I have some statistics here. The-- relative  
25 to pre-COVID, our cash assistance case load is up 43

2 percent. What we have-- the drop-off of income  
3 supports that came with COVID have led to really  
4 rapid increases in applications. So for the period  
5 of 2019 applications for April relative to 223  
6 applications for April was up 53 percent, right? So  
7 there is significant demand for cash assistance. The  
8 funding formula depends a little bit about-- based on  
9 which type of cash assistance that you're talking  
10 about. So, for families with children that are  
11 within their initial five-year period, that is  
12 largely federally funded. For single adults,  
13 families that have exceeded five years' worth of cash  
14 assistance. That is largely city-funded. So,  
15 overall, the cash assistance budget I just over 50  
16 percent funded, but that is the aggregate of a number  
17 of different funding formulas.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: What is the full cash  
19 assistance budget for Fiscal Year 2023?

20 COMMISSIONER PARK: Let me pull that up.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And how much has been  
22 spent to date?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: The cash assistance  
24 budget for FY 23 is \$1.97 billion. About \$1.4  
25 billion has been spent to-date.



2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Doe HRA expect  
3 additional funding is going to be needed in future  
4 years? And if so, will they be baselined?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: we're going to  
6 monitor that really closely with OMB. The trends for  
7 the last year or so have been quite different from  
8 the trends more recently or slightly further back  
9 from that. So it's something that we think it's  
10 appropriate, and OMB thinks it's appropriate to look  
11 at utilization and demand and to adjust on an ongoing  
12 basis.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Council Member  
14 Cabán had to leave, but she asked me to ask this  
15 question, so I will ask this question on the record  
16 for her. The Preliminary Budget included \$1.2  
17 million in baseline funding starting in Fiscal Year  
18 20204 to provide micro-grant assistance to domestic  
19 violence impacted clients with the aim of helping  
20 them maintain safe and stable housing. This funding  
21 supports efforts consistence with the legislation  
22 passed by the Council and the Mayor's Housing  
23 Blueprint, expanding a pilot run by the Mayor's  
24 Office to End Gender Violence based on the high level  
25 being amongst domestic violence victims and the rate

1 of expenditures during the end-- sorry. And the  
2 violence-- gender vi-- End GBV pilot in the budget  
3 response, and the Council called on the  
4 Administration to increase baseline funding for this  
5 program by an additional \$3 million dollars for a  
6 total of \$4.2 million but nothing is added to the  
7 executive plan. Could you please describe how this  
8 program will operate?  
9

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, DSS is a fiscal  
11 conduit for End GVB, so I'm going to need to defer to  
12 them on their operational plans.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Alright, thank you so  
14 much. I'll turn it back to Chair Brannan.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.  
16 Speaker?

17 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you, Chair. Thank  
18 you, Deputy Speaker. Before they leave, we must  
19 greet and acknowledge our 5<sup>th</sup> graders from PS376Q in  
20 Bayside School of Excellence.

21 [applause]

22 SPEAKER ADAMS: We see Council Member  
23 Paladino up there. Welcome to City Council Chambers.  
24 Welcome to the People's House. We hope that you  
25 enjoyed your tour today. Mr. Chair?

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Speaker.

3 Commissioner, quick question, and then we have a  
4 whole bunch of questions from my colleagues. With  
5 regard to the subway safety plan and the mental  
6 health evaluations in the involuntary removals,  
7 understanding it takes often dozens if not 50, 60, 70  
8 times before someone builds trust to engage to get  
9 someone off the street to take shelter and services.  
10 But are any of those attempts sort of-- or the number  
11 of attempts, is there any number that's sort of  
12 inherently baked into when an involuntary removal  
13 might be necessary? Like how many times do we offer  
14 services before we decide that someone might need the  
15 services but not be able to make that decision on  
16 their own?

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
18 Member. It's an interesting question. There is not  
19 a formula. It is the decision about whether or not  
20 somebody is a danger to themselves or others. It's  
21 based on very much point in time situations, and so  
22 yeah, there's no formula.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, questions  
24 from colleagues. We have something from the Speaker,  
25 first, sorry.

2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you very much, Mr.  
3 Chair. Just real quickly, just two trains of thought,  
4 and I didn't want to let this go by. We were made  
5 aware of the NYPD Academy gym over the weekend  
6 housing-- being used as a congregate shelter and  
7 housing children. Was this a mistake, and have they  
8 been moved?

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the-- thank you,  
10 Speaker. The Academy gym is serving as essentially  
11 an overflow site when-- as we are seeing spikes in  
12 asylum intake that it is there to make sure that  
13 everybody has a bed whatever point in time that they  
14 are coming into New York City. We are working with  
15 the staff managing the NYPD site and identifying the  
16 families, and they will-- they will move to  
17 alternative placements. That's true for everybody  
18 who passes through that facility. It is intended to  
19 be only a short-term placement.

20 SPEAKER ADAMS: Can we get a little bit  
21 closer to short term, as there are children involved,  
22 and we know that that is not something that is  
23 approved by the state?  
24  
25

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: It is-- we anticipate  
3 that we will moving those families in the next, you  
4 know, 24 to 48 hours.

5 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, thank you.  
6 Something else that I'd like to bring up also. I  
7 don't know if it was mentioned, hotel conversions to  
8 permanent housing, something that I personally am  
9 excited about, and I'll just say this for the record,  
10 that the Council has continually emphasized the need  
11 for permanent housing solutions and called on the  
12 Administration to prioritize the creation of new  
13 affordable housing over the creation of new shelters,  
14 of course. In other parts of the country, converting  
15 hotels to permanent housing has proved to be an  
16 effective way to reduce homelessness. We're talking  
17 about converting, not creating more shelter systems  
18 within hotels. We're talking about true conversions.  
19 But the City hasn't prioritized this approach, but  
20 last week it was announced that a Hilton near Kennedy  
21 international Airport-- this happens to be my  
22 district in District 28-- would be converted into  
23 permanent housing with a third of the funding coming  
24 from a state program, and 60 percent of units  
25 reserved for people struggling with homelessness.

2 That's something that we're very happy about. Has  
3 DSS explored similar housing solutions? This  
4 approach would be cheaper for the City in the long-  
5 term compared to operating so many shelters and would  
6 provide greater stability for individuals facing  
7 homelessness. We think that this something that's  
8 very feasible, and again, I'm very proud to welcome  
9 this into District 28 in my own district. So, what  
10 are your thoughts on that? Is the City looking to do  
11 similar programming?

12 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Speaker,  
13 and thank you for your support of the project. We  
14 are actually a big piece of the financing structure  
15 for that project. We got let out of the press  
16 coverage, but we are deep in it.

17 SPEAKER ADAMS: That's why I wanted it on  
18 the record.

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you. So one of  
20 the things that I am really excited about is HRA has  
21 had a contract for several years now known as a  
22 Master Lease-- allows not-for-profits to lease  
23 housing and turn it into permanent housing for  
24 individuals or families coming out of the shelter  
25 system. It was the traditional version. It is

2 structured like a regular social service contract so  
3 nine years, relatively short term. One of the things  
4 that we have done is adapt it to be a 30-year  
5 project-based rent contract. So, in some ways  
6 similar to a Section 8 project-based contract, and so  
7 that turns it into something that not-for-profits can  
8 finance off of. And that is what is happening in the  
9 JFK project. I am-- it has-- this is a-- I feel like  
10 I'm using the phrase whole of government a lot. This  
11 is another one that is-- it's got a lot of cooks in  
12 kitchen. It's us. It's HPD. It's HCR. It's HDC,  
13 but we are all really coming together. I think it is  
14 going to be a tremendously exciting project, and I  
15 would love to do more of them.

16 SPEAKER ADAMS: I second and third what  
17 you just said. We need to take a look at this across  
18 the City. I happen to think that this is going to be  
19 a phenomenal new thing that we need to take a look at  
20 citywide.

21 COMMISSIONER PARK: Couldn't agree with  
22 you more.

23 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you, Commissioner.  
24 Mr. Chair?

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, questions  
3 from Council Members starting with Council Member  
4 Schulman, followed by Council Member Carr.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Good afternoon,  
6 Commissioner. So, the Executive Plan includes  
7 \$200,000 for the Mayor's Office of Food Policy which  
8 is budgeted within HRA's budget. Additionally, one  
9 position was added in the Executive Plan to the  
10 Mayor's Office for Food Policy. What will the new  
11 funding be used for? What is the new position they  
12 added?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: We're going to have  
14 to get back to you on that one. This is another  
15 instance where we're serving as a fiscal conduit for  
16 another agency.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, so with  
18 that, if you're going to get back to me, what is the  
19 total OTPS budget for MOFP budgeted within HRA's  
20 budget, and what's the total number of positions  
21 budgeted through HRA for MOFP, and what is the PS  
22 budget for them?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: We can certainly  
24 circle back with you on that.



2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. And I  
3 also-- by the way, when-- I just wanted to piggyback  
4 a little bit on the emergency shelters info. Once  
5 it's established, is there an opportunity to get more  
6 information like healthcare, education? Those are  
7 the big pieces when we have people into the-- the  
8 asylum-seekers moving into the shelters?

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: Absolutely. We're  
10 always happy to--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
12 And working with the Council Members?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: Absolutely.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. The  
15 Executive Plan includes \$774,259 in baseline savings  
16 starting in Fiscal 2024 relating to Get Covered NYC.  
17 As Chair of the Health Committee I'm very interested  
18 in this. How are savings calculated and what do they  
19 relate to?

20 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, as-- the risk of  
21 sounding a little bit like a broken record, we also  
22 serve as the fiscal conduit for p-- you. So, I'm  
23 going to-- we will get back to you on that one. For  
24 better or worse, DSS supports a number of the smaller  
25

1  
2 agencies around the City, and-- but our ability to  
3 speak to their programs--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
5 Okay, so I have a funny feeling you're going to say  
6 the same thing about the next question, but let's  
7 see. The Executive Plan includes a rollover of  
8 \$266.3 million dollars in city funding from Fiscal  
9 Year 2023 to Fiscal Year 2024 related to HRA's  
10 Medicaid expenditures. Can you explain what this  
11 specifically relates to and why the funding is being  
12 rolled?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes. This one is  
14 certainly our budget. I'm going to turn it over to  
15 Ellen Levine.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Oh.

17 ELLEN LEVINE: Thank you, Commissioner.  
18 This is a re-estimate just on the timing of payments  
19 for Medicaid initiatives. The timing's based on the  
20 amounts that are approved by the Federal Government,  
21 and that's expected in next year, not this Fiscal  
22 Year.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you.  
24 Okay. And my next question-- you know, I'm running  
25 out of time. So it's a little bit of long questions.

1  
2 In 2019 the Council successfully negotiated the  
3 launch of Fair Fares, a program that offers a 50  
4 percent city subsidy of public transit fares, the  
5 City residents with incomes up to 100 percent of the  
6 federal poverty level regardless of immigration  
7 status. To date, over 280,000 people have enrolled  
8 in Fair Fares, but there are many more low-income  
9 individuals with limited resources who rely on public  
10 transit and are not eligible for the program. In the  
11 budget response, the Council called on the  
12 Administration to expand eligibility for Fair Fares  
13 for city residents with incomes up to 200 percent of  
14 FPL. The Council estimated the expansion would  
15 require an additional \$61.5 million dollars of  
16 baseline funding to bring the total baseline budget  
17 to Fair Fares to \$136.5 million dollars.  
18 Additionally, the budget response noted if it turned  
19 out that the uptake rate for the expansion of Fair  
20 Fares is greater than expected, the City should  
21 allocate the additional funds necessary to cover the  
22 cost of providing Fair Fares to all eligible  
23 applicants. Nothing was added to the Executive  
24 Budget to address this request. Has the

2 Administration estimated what such an expansion will  
3 cost and if so, how much?

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
5 Member. We very much value the Fair Fares program.  
6 We think it does terrific work. We have heard the  
7 feedback around increasing the income limit. We have  
8 a range of estimates around what it cost. It is a  
9 significant cost to increase it to the higher income  
10 thresholds. I think I-- we can certainly follow up  
11 with you offline on what our cost estimates are. I  
12 don't have them with me, but we do think that that  
13 can be-- that should be a part of the overall budget  
14 conversation.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Chair, I have a  
16 few questions related to that issue. Can I finish  
17 them?

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. Is  
20 the number posted online which was over 286,000 as of  
21 last Friday the current number of active users, or  
22 something else?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: That's-- that is the--  
24 - yes, that's the right number of total enrollments.  
25

2 Not all those individuals are actively using the  
3 card.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: What is the  
5 monthly application volume, and what is the approval  
6 rate?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: 71 percent approval  
8 rates. I don't have the monthly application volume,  
9 but we can circle back with you on that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. Can you  
11 provide a breakdown of the fiscal 2023 \$75 million  
12 dollar budget by expense type?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. The vast  
14 majority of that is used for the benefits themselves.  
15 A small amount is used for the staff that administer  
16 it and for outreach, as well as mailing the cards and  
17 things like that, but it is-- the amount of the OTPS,  
18 the non-benefit cards is in the-- is a few million  
19 dollars relative to the overall budget.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: What's the  
21 actual spending been thus far in Fiscal Year 2023,  
22 and can you provide a breakout by expense type?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: This-- so this is a  
24 fully city-funded program and I believe we're on  
25 track to spend the full \$75 million dollars.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. And my  
3 last question is when will fares be added-- when will  
4 Fair Fares be added to the Omni system?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: We're working very  
6 closely with MTA right now, and the point that MTA  
7 converts fully to Omni, we will be ready.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, thank you  
9 very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
11 Carr?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you, Chairs.  
13 Congratulations, Commissioner, on your appointment  
14 and I want to express my appreciation to your Staten  
15 Island and Intergov teams on their accessibility  
16 since the migrant shelter crisis began and you've had  
17 shelters operating in my borough. I want to talk a  
18 little bit about the right to shelter. I think it's  
19 been the subject of intense interest over the years,  
20 and I think the position of the Administration has  
21 been that the right to shelter extends to those  
22 individuals who are coming here as part of the  
23 migrant crisis, but that's not a position that's been  
24 embraced by other jurisdictions in the state. So I  
25 was wondering if you could explain to me why the

2 right to shelter applies to those who have no prior  
3 history of residency in this city or even the State?

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
5 Member. Let me start with the very significant  
6 caveat that I am not a lawyer, so I will do my best  
7 to answer those questions, but again, I'm not a  
8 lawyer. So, yes, the right to shelter as it has been  
9 interpreted in New York City encompasses everybody.  
10 That was true before the asylum-seeker crisis began.  
11 There are slightly different-- there's an eligibility  
12 process for families with children, for adult  
13 families. The same eligibility process does not  
14 apply for single adults. The right to shelter is  
15 this because of litigation that was brought  
16 specifically in New York City. It is based on an  
17 interpretation of the State Constitution, but the  
18 cases were specific to New York City. So, the-- a  
19 comparable right to shelter separate and apart from  
20 residency history doesn't currently exist in other  
21 parts of the state because those-- a comparable court  
22 case hasn't been brought. Again, I am not a lawyer,  
23 so please take that with a large grain of salt.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Understood, but I  
25 think it's fair to say that when that consent decree

2 was signed-- I think it's a series of consent  
3 decrees, actually-- nobody contemplated a crisis on  
4 this scale, and that the City would ever have to  
5 accommodate such a large number of individuals and  
6 families at a specific period of time. So, now we  
7 have three emergency shelters in my district. A  
8 fourth was just opened in Council Member Hanks'  
9 district, that had from time to time been used for  
10 New York City homeless previously. So we're at a  
11 crisis point where we're expending a significant  
12 amount of money-- and by the way I'm inclined to  
13 agree with your estimates because it's always safer  
14 to assume they'll be higher in government, and at the  
15 same time, a diminishment of our resources for the  
16 existing New York City homeless population, not to  
17 mention the burdens faced by the New York City  
18 Education Department, shortage of ESL teachers, and  
19 the list goes on and on. So I guess at what point do  
20 we have an exit strategy for this current situation,  
21 especially given that, you know, everyone seems to be  
22 indicated the crisis is only going to get worse.

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
24 Member. I absolutely agree this is unprecedented. I  
25 think, you know, when we talk about exit strategy, at



1  
2 the end of the day, I think we need to be looking to  
3 the Federal Government, right? New York City cannot  
4 control immigration policy. I see this and many of  
5 my colleagues see this really as the situation that  
6 we are in right now as a breakdown in federal  
7 immigration policy, and for us to get to actual long-  
8 term resolution, I think we all need to be raising  
9 our voices together to push for a true federal  
10 solution.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I agree with you.  
12 And just finally, if you could get us the dates for  
13 the commencement and conclusion of any emergency  
14 shelter contracts in the borough. If you have that  
15 hand now I'd love to hear it. If not, I'm happy to  
16 take it from here.

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: I don't have it, but  
18 we'll follow up.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you. Thank  
20 you, Chairs.

21 COMMISSIONER PARK: Okay, we've also been  
22 joined by Council Member Ung, and now I'm going to  
23 turn to Council Member Barron for questions.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you very  
25 much. Commissioner, number one, I am very, very

1  
2 upset about the unequal distribution of shelters in  
3 communities of color, particularly black and brown  
4 communities. There was a Fair Share Act or policy in  
5 1989 Charter Revision said that you cannot  
6 oversaturate in any given communities. Yet, when it  
7 comes to black and brown communities, we're  
8 oversaturated, 14, 15, 25 shelter in the Bronx, 25  
9 shelters. In Bensonhurst, that's predominantly Asian  
10 and white, I believe there are none. In Bay Ridge,  
11 predominantly white, Asian, none or very few if any.  
12 I believe there are none. I want to know why. Are  
13 you aware of that? And how many shelters have been  
14 built in Bensonhurst and Bay Ridge in Brooklyn, and  
15 how many in East New York and Brownsville and other  
16 black and brown communities in the Bronx. You are  
17 violating-- the agency is violating the Fair Share  
18 Act over and over again, and obviously it doesn't  
19 matter that we have a black mayor, because it's  
20 irrelevant. The racist policy of oversaturating must  
21 stop, and I want to know your commitment to that, and  
22 are you aware of that? Secondly, why are we calling  
23 it savings? These are cuts. These are budget cuts  
24 that occurring, and the justification by the Mayor  
25 for the agency cuts is that he had a fiscal challenge

1 that we don't have enough money. Yet, there's a  
2 projected 2-point some odd billion for 2023 and  
3 another 2-point some odd billion for 2024, and  
4 unexpected revenue \$4 billion dollars. The entire  
5 agency cuts I believe is about \$1.9 billion. That \$4  
6 billion can be used towards that. The asylum-  
7 seekers, he's bloating that cost, I believe. I  
8 believe the IBO is closer with the \$3 billion, and \$1  
9 billion is coming from the state, so that makes it  
10 only \$2 billion. So you have \$2 billion for that, \$2  
11 billion for the agency, and you've got an unexpected  
12 \$4 billion, and plus, there's \$8.3 billion in the  
13 reserve account. There's no reason for these cuts.  
14 And please, most commissioner, stop coming before us  
15 and saying this is not going to hurt services. That  
16 is not true. That is not true. These are going to  
17 hurt services in just about every agency including  
18 mental health. I believe Jordan Neely should be  
19 alive today, should be alive today. He was failed by  
20 the system and killed by a vigilante, Daniel Penny,  
21 not charged to this moment. I believe that we got to  
22 work harder in this unconscionable and unacceptable  
23 that we have the kind of money in this city going to  
24 agencies and then when it comes to black and brown  
25

2 communities, we're oversaturated, and the shelter in  
3 our communities, they don't have a strong permanent  
4 housing plan. It does not exist. I don't care what  
5 you say on papers or at these hearings. They don't  
6 have a workforce development program to train the  
7 people in the shelters to do work and get work and  
8 seek jobs for them, and they definitely are not  
9 dealing with mental health services in these  
10 shelters. They are warehousing us. They're  
11 warehousing homeless people and just throwing them in  
12 there, and then allowing these hotels-- and I agree  
13 with the Speaker, the hotel conversions should be for  
14 permanent housing not more shelters. We don't have  
15 to have this problem, and I know this is for HPD,  
16 but-- and the City Council. We should not give  
17 another single subsidy to housing developers who  
18 don't include 30, 40 to 50 percent for the homeless.  
19 They're getting free money. When we get it from the  
20 government it's called welfare. When they get it  
21 it's cute, subsidies. Well, either we all on  
22 subsidies or we all on welfare. They're getting  
23 welfare money, free money, and not providing  
24 affordable housing. These are my concerns. I  
25 believe that they can be addressed adequately with

2 the funding sources we have, and I would like for you  
3 to address that, especially letting me know a list of  
4 the shelters that have been built. And as far as  
5 notification is concerned, I got called last week to  
6 tell me tonight, the same the day, there's going to  
7 be asylum-seekers in a hotel in my district. How  
8 about that for notification? Something wrong.  
9 Something wrong with that. And it has to stop.

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
11 Member. Let me-- let me try and address those  
12 issues. So, with respect to distribution, it is  
13 something that we are extremely focused on. You're,  
14 of course, a 100 percent right that there is  
15 differential representation of the shelters across  
16 the City. As we are siting new longer term shelters,  
17 it is something that we pay very close attention to,  
18 making sure that we have sites in every district,  
19 every Community Board, very Council district. So, we  
20 aren't finished with that process by a long shot, but  
21 there is work. There is actively work happening. As  
22 I noted, our notifications on some of the longer-term  
23 sites--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
25 Before you get to notifications, excuse me for

2 cutting you. There are differences. This is racist.  
3 It's no differences. It's racist. Do you have any  
4 shelters in Bensonhurst or Bay Ridge?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: We are actively  
6 siting in every single district. Those-- some of  
7 those notifications are-- we have been focused on the  
8 asylum response, but there are notifications that are  
9 pending for districts across the City.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Commissioner, I  
11 did ask you a direct question. Do you have any  
12 shelters in Bensonhurst or Bay Ridge?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: There are absolutely--  
14 - there are districts that do not have shelters now.  
15 We are--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] Is  
17 Bensonhurst and--

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing]  
19 Council Member Barron, we're not doing this.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Bay Ridge one of  
21 those.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We're not doing  
23 this.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: No, no, you  
25 didn't say that to no one else.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I got 20 other  
3 Council Members.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Every time it  
5 comes to me you become concerned about time, but  
6 others you just--

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing] I got  
8 20 other Council Members. This is not-- this is not  
9 how we run it. Council Member Powers?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Do you have any--  
11 do you have any shelters in Bensonhurst--

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing]  
13 Council Member Barron, your time is up. Council  
14 Member Powers?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: You shouldn't do  
16 this, because you didn't do this to other people.  
17 You do this--

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing] I got  
19 20 members--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] when  
21 you don't like the question.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: who have questions.  
23 Council Member Powers, thank you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you.  
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, make sure  
3 you do that equitably. When other people are asking  
4 questions, they can go on and on, but when you don't  
5 like my questions, all of a sudden time becomes an  
6 issue.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I will follow up  
8 with that. Nice to see everyone. Thank you for your  
9 testimony. I want to start by saying I think this is  
10 about to explode, this whole entire situation, and I  
11 think the use of the Police Academy, I have some  
12 questions about that. But with the IBOs  
13 differential, I think it's still it's right to aim  
14 high here on the cost. I think this whole situation  
15 here with the migrants is about to explode, and I  
16 think we need to be properly budgeted for it. I had  
17 a couple of questions. I live and represent an area  
18 right down the block from a Police Academy. I'm  
19 getting a lot of questions about it. Wanted to follow  
20 up on your statements. I saw something you said that  
21 said 24-48 hours you believe people are moving out of  
22 there, is that correct?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the-- yes. The  
24 intent is that this is a short-term overflow  
25 facility. So the initial people who were placed



2 there have already been moved out and we're working  
3 closely with the NYCEM team that is operating the  
4 site on a day-to-day basis to make sure that there is  
5 a flow of placements.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: How many  
7 individuals are in there today?

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: I don't have that  
9 number right now.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: okay. There are  
11 children in there?

12 COMMISSIONER PARK: There's been a lot of  
13 conversations that have been happening while I'm  
14 sitting here, so I don't have the-- I don't have the  
15 most up-to-date information. There were some  
16 families with children who were placed there.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay. So there  
18 were some. We're still not sure if they're there.

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: I-- I just-- it is  
20 happening in real time, and I--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: [interposing]  
22 Okay, I understand. I understand. Okay. The  
23 Council Member, Chair Brannan asked about the Subway  
24 Safety Plan and what's the threshold until somebody  
25 might-- they go from voluntary offer of services to

2 involuntary, and I heard your answer. But how many  
3 involuntary transfers have there been done under this  
4 Administration.

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: We'll circle back to  
6 you with that number. I don't--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: [interposing] Do  
8 you have any estimate of that?

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: It is-- I'm going to  
10 circle back with you on that number. I don't--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: [interposing]  
12 Okay, I'm going to follow up because I feel like this  
13 is--

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: [interposing] Yeah,  
15 absolutely.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: going to get  
17 lost. So, do you have any data for like the last  
18 month or the last year?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: It is-- the vast  
20 majority of the transports that either our outreach  
21 teams or the police or others do. It's more than 80  
22 percent of them are voluntary. You know, even when  
23 somebody is being transported to a hospital, it is  
24 typically a voluntary request--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: [interposing]  
3 Decision they make. Okay.

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the involuntary is  
5 something that we use when it is absolutely  
6 necessary. It is the exception rather than the rule.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay. Police  
8 Academy, I believe, was used because there was a call  
9 to ask city agencies if they could-- if there were  
10 buildings available or space available. Are there  
11 other buildings, city buildings being used right now  
12 or planning to be used for housing asylum-seekers?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: There's a lot of  
14 things under consideration. The teams were going out  
15 all weekend to assess different sites. I honestly  
16 don't have the most up-to-date because it is  
17 happening in real time on whether or not there are  
18 other sites opening imminently, but we are looking at  
19 all the things in our-- all the options in our  
20 toolbox because this is such a significant issue.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay, the Police  
22 Academy is open, I know, very quickly, and totally  
23 understandable, and I've got a lot questions for  
24 constituents right out of the gate, and then I'll  
25 have one question [inaudible]. So just notice as

2 particularly where you might foresee another building  
3 being used, very helpful so that we can as Council  
4 Members can talk to our constituents and explain  
5 what's going on. Helpful to have information about  
6 the short-term use, but I didn't have that until  
7 today. The last question I wanted to ask is just  
8 agency purview. HPD is operating some of these  
9 shelters. OEM and Health + Hospitals seem to be  
10 operating some shelters. You guys-- I just-- I'm  
11 still confused about which agency takes the lead on a  
12 different shelter here. So, like, how does HPD  
13 become the lead on-- I think the upstate ones might  
14 be HPD versus you guys taking lead. Like how is that  
15 decision made or what is the reason that one would  
16 take the lead over another?

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. Let me first  
18 just address the notice and this gets to the  
19 questions about notices raised by Council Member  
20 Barron as well. The notice on emergency sites is  
21 incredibly short-term. It is not-- not for lack of  
22 trying, but because we are opening sites in real  
23 time, we will absolutely seek for ways that we can  
24 provide more notice, but we are-- it is a place where  
25 it is very challenging. On the jurisdiction, this is

1  
2 a-- we've got a lot of agencies at the table. We are  
3 collaborating very closely. For the first, you know,  
4 many of months of this, DHS was the agency as the  
5 lead sheltering agency for the City. As I mentioned  
6 earlier, we've opened 126 sites thus far, and we  
7 continue to open on an almost daily basis, but we--  
8 you know, we like every other agency have core  
9 responsibilities that we need to make sure that we  
10 are meeting. So, the decision was made to bring more  
11 agencies to the table to spread the work load. Given  
12 the significance of the issue, it really is whole of  
13 government, but I would say it is done on a more  
14 collaborative way than formulaic.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you.  
16 Thanks Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
18 Cabán?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you. Thank  
20 you for your testimony. Thank you for taking our  
21 questions. I want to start with the housing  
22 stability micro-grants program, and I know that  
23 Deputy Speaker asked a few questions about it, but I  
24 want to dig a little bit deeper on it. You know, the  
25 pilot project dispersed around-- and first of all, I

1 want to sing y'all's praises, because during the peak  
2 of the pandemic a program was stood up very, very  
3 fast. It was life-saving, and to be able to build on  
4 that is a really exciting thing. But the pilot  
5 project dispersed about 500,000 in two months,  
6 stopping because the funding ran out, certainly not  
7 because the demand ran out. And we currently have-- I  
8 think, you know, the Exec Budget includes \$1.2  
9 million in baseline funding which the baselining is  
10 incredibly important. I want to acknowledge that,  
11 but the \$1.2 falls really, really short. I know the  
12 Council responded with an increase to \$4.2 million in  
13 a budget which is certainly a good start, but I also  
14 think still that's not near enough, and advocates and  
15 providers are wisely calling for a \$6 million dollar  
16 investment, and the figure is based on some math, and  
17 so I just want to lay that out for the record as  
18 well. It's based on the DV shelter population of  
19 4,109 total households, 481 single adults, 3,628  
20 families with a 15 percent admin set-aside, and at  
21 about 2,000 per grant. And so \$6 million would  
22 enable the City to potentially reach more than 2,500  
23 households which equals more than 50 percent of the  
24 families and single adult survivors in shelters, plus  
25

2 some survivors who are not in the DV shelter system  
3 for a whole myriad of reasons. And so I wanted to  
4 ask you about what your experience with what the  
5 current need is, where you see a gap, describing a  
6 little bit around sort of the grant administration,  
7 but also do you agree that the number should be  
8 larger than that or that the need exceeds that \$1.2  
9 that is proposed to be baselined? And then my next  
10 questions which I'll follow up with, have to do with  
11 the DV shelter system, and I just want to point out  
12 again that this could go a very long way in  
13 alleviating the burden on our shelter systems and  
14 interrupt survivors who are leaving dangerous  
15 situations, who ultimately go into the shelter system  
16 which is the majority of folks that are in our family  
17 shelters.

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you. I wish we  
19 could take credit for the program that you applaud.  
20 We're a fiscal conduit for End GVB, so they are the  
21 ones who designed the program, administer the  
22 program, and are going to be in a better place to  
23 speak to your specific questions. We really do pass  
24 that through to them. I'm sorry.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: But what about the  
3 numbers needs? I mean, do you acknowledge that's  
4 sort of the-- the \$1.2 million that's baselined here  
5 does not come close to meeting the need?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: Again, because we are  
7 not actually involved in the administration of the  
8 program, I don't feel like I can speak on behalf of  
9 my colleagues.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Chair, can I ask  
11 one additional question?

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Go ahead.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you. And  
14 just moving-- because it is related to the domestic  
15 violence shelter capacity. I won't give a bunch of  
16 background, because I know that I want to be  
17 respectful of folks' times. But there were several  
18 tier two DV units that were slated to open over the  
19 course of calendar year 2022. Are all of those  
20 planned units now operational? And you know, if not,  
21 why and when will they be opened? And what's  
22 happening with replacing the 74 lost emergency DV  
23 beds?

24 LISA FITZPATRICK: So, right now, HRA's  
25 on track to add 94 additional emergency shelter beds,



2 and as well as 105 transitional beds-- transitional  
3 units by the end of Fiscal Year 2024.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Now we have Council  
5 Member Riley followed by Stevens.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Chair.  
7 Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for testifying  
8 today. I just have a few questions. In the  
9 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report between FY22  
10 and 23, the timeliness of SNAP application has  
11 tremendously fell downwards. Though it is partially  
12 attributed to the workforce development matters, it  
13 is also evident that information that is not being  
14 efficiently processed. Many constituents have  
15 contacted my office requesting assistance with issues  
16 such as their CityFHEPS renewals not being marked as  
17 received in a timely manner, and being put at risk of  
18 program expulsions, case closures for missing  
19 documents on emergency SNAP benefits, failure of the  
20 City to administer payments for property owners for  
21 CityFHEPS and more. Even when my office assists in  
22 submitting documents on behalf of the constituents,  
23 resolutions can often take months. So with that  
24 being stated, how can the City significantly invest  
25 in modernizing and streamlining our public assistance

1 applications, and how can we deeply invest in digital  
2 infrastructure to ensure that any agency, but  
3 especially a lifeline agency such as HRA doesn't face  
4 frequent severe outage?  
5

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
7 Member. You raise some very serious issues that of  
8 real priority to the agency. So with respect to--  
9 starting with SNAP, our SNAP timeliness rates have  
10 improved. There is a long way to go, but they have  
11 improved. What we are doing-- we are very focused on  
12 hiring-- have brought in a number of eligibility  
13 specialists over the last several months. We are  
14 investing in technology. we are working with the  
15 state on waivers so that we can smooth out our  
16 recertifications and overall just looking at all of  
17 our processes to figure out any place where there are  
18 bottlenecks or ways that we can do things more  
19 efficiently than we are doing it. Something that we--  
20 - so we are very, very focused on that, and I think  
21 really, again, we're not done yet, but have really  
22 turned a corner on SNAP processing. With respect to  
23 CityFHEPS renewals, aware that there were some  
24 moderate processing delays there, too. we are  
25 rolling out a new system overall for CityFHEPS

1 processing, referred to it at various points in time  
2 in front of this body as both current in the landlord  
3 management system-- same thing, two different names.  
4 There have-- I think once that is fully in place,  
5 that will be-- the process will be significantly  
6 streamlined. There have been some hiccups involved  
7 with rolling out new technology. so, just last month  
8 we were able to do-- find some auto-renewals that  
9 needed to happen, able to-- made some significant--  
10 did a significant number of renewals in our automated  
11 basis for CityFHEPS which I think should address some  
12 of the barriers, but it's also a place where we're  
13 really focused on hiring and making some process  
14 improvements.  
15

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you,  
17 Commissioner. Chair, may I ask some more questions?  
18 Commissioner, I'm going to ask two more questions,  
19 but just if we could do it real quick answer for  
20 [inaudible] time. The City has ambitious plans to  
21 scale up restorative funding to agencies over the  
22 next couple of fiscal years. This is some welcoming  
23 news. For us to be financially sound position to  
24 deepen such investments in the future, we must make  
25 sure that we're treating our present wounds to

2 stabilize our city and our economy. How will HRA  
3 will ensure that we are not only meeting our  
4 benchmarks by excelling to provide more expansive  
5 services in New York?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: That's a-- thank you.  
7 That's a big question to answer quickly. We are  
8 certainly going to aim big in terms of providing  
9 services to New Yorkers. We know that we touch more  
10 than three million New Yorkers a year, and it's  
11 really critical that we do that well. So, it is  
12 investing in technology, filling our vacancies, and  
13 thinking about ways that we can innovate in providing  
14 services that are just meeting band aid needs, but  
15 that actually help families and individuals grow out  
16 of poverty.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. And  
18 lastly, the Administration for Children's Services  
19 have reported sharp declines in service levels during  
20 the COVID-19 pandemic. Amongst the biggest  
21 challenges faced by child welfare staff is the issue  
22 of time constraints due in larger parts to the  
23 sizeable caseloads, which limits the time case  
24 workers can spend with families. What research was  
25 conducted to improve processes and what method is

2 being used to reduce caseloads, increase service  
3 levels and provide the needed support and staff to  
4 New Yorkers in need.

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, I'm going to have  
6 to defer that one to ACS. I think they're up next.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have  
9 Council Member Stevens followed by Brewer.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hi,  
11 Commissioner, how you guys doing? You guys been  
12 doing great. It's a long day of testifying. But I  
13 just have a couple-- well, before I even ask my  
14 questions, I just want to make sure that I'm  
15 associated with Council Members Barron questioning  
16 and frustrations. I am one of the council districts  
17 that is oversaturated, and I know you guys have been  
18 doing some work around trying to provide more equity,  
19 but just understanding why he's so frustrated, and  
20 why our constituent are so frustrated, because for  
21 them, they don't see the equity in it, and then when  
22 we hear things like fair share, it's only a fair  
23 share in certain communities. So, I just to make  
24 sure I'm associated with that. But I do know you  
25 guys are trying to rectify that, but it is years of

2 rectification and folks are rightfully so frustrated  
3 behind it. And so any information you have about  
4 expediting in districts where there are no shelters  
5 and zero shelters-- are we really important?  
6 Hopefully at next hearing we'll have those numbers  
7 because I think that, you know, people in my  
8 community, as you guys know, are extremely fed up.  
9 So, just thinking about what that looks like and how  
10 do we make sure that there's true equity around the  
11 distribution of shelter. But my question that I have  
12 today is around youth and these vouchers, and just  
13 really trying to get to the bottom of it. And so now  
14 that the shopping letters for all the DYCD CityFHEPS  
15 pilot vouchers have been issues, can you please  
16 confirm that the youth in the DYCD runaway homeless  
17 youth system do not have the ability to be issued  
18 CFEPS vouchers while they are still in RHY programs?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, let me-- thank  
20 you, Council Member. I'm going to give you the DSS  
21 perspective on that, the--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing]  
23 Yeah, that's what I'm looking for.

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: [inaudible] at DYCD.  
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, no, no, I've  
3 already asked DYCD. So I'm looking for your  
4 perspective on this.

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: so, we're working  
6 really closely with DYCD and with OMB on the flow of  
7 vouchers for DYCD clients. It's my understanding that  
8 they have been largely focused recently on making  
9 full use of their emergency housing voucher  
10 allocation. They got a quite large EHV allocation as  
11 part of the City's overall package, and then there's  
12 additional CityFHEPS vouchers that are available but  
13 because of the large allocation of the EHV, that that  
14 has been the focus thus far, and that we will adjust--  
15 -

16 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing]  
17 I'm sorry, what is this large voucher allocation that  
18 we speak of, because that's not what I'm hearing?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: Okay, the Emergency  
20 Housing Vouchers were a federal voucher stream,  
21 right, that were created as part of the American  
22 Recovery Act--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing] Oh,  
24 yeah. Oh, that's what you're talking about.

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: right, and so--  
3 right.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, DYCD got--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, they got a  
7 couple but that-- the system that was taking them has  
8 been closed already, so they don't have access to  
9 that any more.

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: Right. So, but the  
11 focus has-- because they were able to use EHV  
12 vouchers to get most-- so many of their young people  
13 placed, that that was the focus and we are now  
14 pivoting to the CityFHEPS and that we'll collaborate  
15 with both DYCD and OMB going forward.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I mean, what is  
17 that-- I'm sorry. Just one more. And what is that  
18 collaboration actually look like and how do we  
19 expedite this process because currently, as you know,  
20 this is a huge issue, and I'm not really  
21 understanding why once city agency has more access to  
22 these vouchers than another city agencies and why do  
23 they-- and why are both systems not given the same  
24 access and affordability to ensure that people are  
25



2 able to move into homes and not shuffling them from  
3 shelter to shelter?

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: And thank you.

5 Shuffling is certainly is not the goal here. I think  
6 they really-- the intent is to really understand how  
7 it works for young people to be using the CityFHEPS  
8 vouchers and that started a little while ago, but  
9 because of the focus on EHV, we have a little less  
10 information, but now that they are fully using--  
11 moving towards fully using their CityFHEPS  
12 allocation, we will be in a position to, again, with  
13 DYCD, with OMB to look at how vouchers are  
14 distributed to that population.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you. This  
16 is very helpful, and I would look forward to having  
17 additional conversations about this, because it's  
18 been very frustrating on not really understanding why  
19 our young people are being denied this. So, look  
20 forward to being part of those conversations that  
21 you're having with DYCD and DHS. Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: Of course.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: COUNCIL MEMBER  
24 Brewer?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I'm  
3 glad you're in charge, Commissioner. I assume we're  
4 not going to have a tent in Central Park. Do you  
5 have any update on that?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: I'm not aware of a  
7 tent in Central Park.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: In terms of--  
9 I've been talking about working papers, and I think  
10 I've given up specifically. I assume that we'll get  
11 working papers maybe after the election next year,  
12 and I know that there's some 150 days, 180 days. I'm  
13 really up on working papers. But in between, since I  
14 don't see them coming for the asylum-seekers. I want  
15 to know about the IDNYC because every piece of ID  
16 helps in terms of people being able to navigate this  
17 crazy city, so we wanted to know. The agency  
18 anticipates implementation of the upgrades combined  
19 with historical under spending. We hope that it will  
20 work. The Executive Plan reflects city funds saving  
21 one million in 24, and then it goes on to five. I  
22 guess I'm less interested in savings and trying to  
23 figure out how we get people ID. What is the amount  
24 that is being allocated and what is your hope to get  
25 improvements so that they can in fact be allocated to

1 the-- everybody, but particularly the asylum-seekers?  
2  
3 It's just not happening now.

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: thank you, Council  
5 Member. We're very much committed to IDNYC. The  
6 budget for the program is in the neighborhood of \$15  
7 million dollars a year. We do anticipate that we'll  
8 be able to achieve some savings there because we're  
9 rolling out new technology, particularly focused on  
10 our online application, but we are issuing ID's now.  
11 There's more than two million people who have them,  
12 and we're issuing them every day, so we're--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] But  
14 what's the backlog? Because what happens is I'm  
15 trying to get them-- I have seven shelters. I work  
16 hard with these families. We can't get them.

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: so, the wait time for  
18 an appointment right now is about 45 days, but  
19 there's also walk-in appointments at a lot of our  
20 benefit access centers, and then the turnaround time  
21 is once after appointment is just a few days.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. We'll keep  
23 talking about that one. Next, the tax payer ID  
24 number known as a TIL-- I'm trying to think of how we  
25 can get not just asylum-seekers but obviously New

2 Yorker's jobs. Now, I understand you're not supposed  
3 to have a job, I got it, if you don't have papers.  
4 However, people are working. So, is any effort by  
5 the City to try to get people the tax payer ID  
6 number? Is that something that's on your agenda for  
7 those who are asylum-seekers?

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
9 Member. That's not something I've-- we DSS have been  
10 working on, but we're happy to follow up with our  
11 colleagues and see if there's other efforts going on.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but some of  
13 the nonprofits are doing that. Next is for the job  
14 training programs. I understand that there were some  
15 cuts. There were savings in 24. I guess I'm really  
16 concerned because the Parks Department, in  
17 particular, and you mentioned that in your testimony,  
18 that's a great program. They got people jobs. So  
19 what is it that you're advocating for New Yorkers to  
20 get jobs? What's your plan for those who are in your  
21 shelter to get jobs?

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]  
24 Because it needs more money.

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
3 Member. So, our focus is really on programs that  
4 result in long-term high-quality good-paying jobs.  
5 So we have protected the programs where we're pairing  
6 with CUNY, where we're supporting people in  
7 education, where we're training people for particular  
8 job training tracks. What we found was-- have found  
9 with some of the Parks work is that those tend to be  
10 short-term seasonal while somebody is in the  
11 subsidized placement, but that they very rarely  
12 translate into longer term work. So that is why  
13 were-- we took some reduction there. It is on the  
14 margins. It remains a fairly robust program.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so can you  
16 get us, not necessarily today, last year and this  
17 year how many people you expect to train, how many  
18 people you expect to get jobs, and what the funding  
19 is for those programs?

20 COMMISSIONER PARK: Absolutely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, and then  
22 just finally, just during the summer, you're going to  
23 have a lot of young people who are not in school who  
24 are asylum, not New Yorkers necessarily, because they  
25 do have some opportunities for income, what are you

2 going to do? Whether it's summer food programs--  
3 those people aren't going to have any food otherwise.  
4 They've been in school, now they're not. What's your  
5 plan for the summer? I don't know, I got 500 kids at  
6 least, maybe more, in the hotels that I have across  
7 the City. What's your plan?

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, just to clarify  
9 specifically with food-- thank you, Council Member--  
10 that most-- majority of the asylum-seekers are in  
11 hotel settings because-- even families, and because  
12 the families there don't have kitchens, we're  
13 providing three meals a day, that will continue.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know. I've  
15 seen the food. I think I prefer summer food, I'm  
16 just telling you, and so-- and also activity.  
17 Sitting in the room is not going to cut it.

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: I hear that feedback,  
19 very important feedback. We will coordinate with our  
20 colleagues at DOE and DYCD and come up with a plan.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You'll let us  
22 know when that plan is available as soon as possible,  
23 please?

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: Of course.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
3 Restler?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so  
5 much Chair Brannan and Chair Ayala and Madam Speaker.  
6 It's good to see you, and congratulations  
7 Commissioner Park, and good to see you Lisa and Jill,  
8 Ellen. I hope that Joslyn's okay. I just wanted to  
9 ask firstly on headcount. HRA, DSS as a whole is  
10 very much-- HRA in particular is one of the agencies  
11 I have most confidence in, but you can't do your job  
12 if you don't have the staff, and I'm a broken record.  
13 I ask you all the same questions every time you come  
14 here, but I'm going to keep going. I think it was two  
15 hearings ago where the Administrator acknowledged  
16 that the headcount at HRA had not been this low in  
17 her 38 years of service in the Agency, and I believe  
18 that we're still facing the same reality. The Exec  
19 headcount for FY24 is 12,132 down approximately 900  
20 positions from FY23 Adopted, and we went through the  
21 City record data from earlier this year to look at  
22 how many folks are being hired and how many folks are  
23 leaving DSS, excuse me, HRA. And according to the  
24 data that we reviewed 194 individuals were hired in  
25 the first two months of the year, but 195 people left

2 the Agency. So we saw a net reduction in the staff  
3 despite the presumed hiring efforts that this  
4 Administration is claimed to be making. So what is  
5 the current headcount at HRA? Or actually-- let's do  
6 HRA. What's the current headcount at HRA and will  
7 you commit to sharing monthly updates with the  
8 Council on the headcount at the Agency, so that we  
9 can evaluate your progress in hiring?

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: Current HRA  
11 headcount is 10,334.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 10,334, wow.

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: DHS, if you'd like  
14 it, is 1,777

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: It is-- it was  
16 not long ago when there were 15,000 headcount at HRA  
17 alone. The rapid decline that we've been experience  
18 at this agency is totally unacceptable, and I really  
19 do hope that as your prioritize the many challenges  
20 that you all face in providing services to the most  
21 vulnerable, we prioritize headcount first and  
22 foremost. We need people on staff to be able to  
23 provide work to people in need. So, would you be  
24 willing to provide monthly updates to the General  
25 Welfare Committee on the headcount at each agency?



2 COMMISSIONER PARK: We're happy to work  
3 with you on the best way to convey information. I  
4 want to make sure that before I promise something  
5 under oath that our data systems can actually support  
6 it, but we're happy to work with you on information.  
7 I do want to chime in on overall headcount.

8 Absolutely we have vacancies that we need to fill,  
9 and we are prioritizing hiring, and we have seen  
10 significant upticks in the number of people accepting  
11 offers and being on-boarded. That being said, the  
12 Agency isn't necessarily in exactly the same place as  
13 it was a few years ago. So, for example, the number-  
14 -

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] I  
16 understand.

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: of Medicaid clients  
18 who are processed by HRA has dropped substantially  
19 because people transitioned over to state Medicaid  
20 through the exchanges, right?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm tight on  
22 time. I do appreciate-- I know there have been  
23 technology upgrades. I also heard you say that we're  
24 at a 43 percent increase in people who need cash  
25 assistance since pre-pandemic and that our case

2 processing time on food stamps is still far too slow.

3 So we do need staff. We need more staff. We have  
4 wildly inadequate numbers of staff. I believe in the  
5 ability of the team that you and Lisa are leading to  
6 do the work, but not if there aren't people to do it.

7 So I just want to, if I may, ask one more question on  
8 Right to Counsel. So, currently funded at \$92

9 million but \$461 is required to meet-- \$461 million  
10 is the amount that we've determined is required to

11 meet the full need. Do you believe that the current  
12 funding for HR-- for Right to Counsel is sufficient

13 to provide an attorney to everyone in need? And

14 what-- well, and I'm deeply concerned about the lack  
15 of compliance with the Right to Counsel law and the

16 fact that we are failing to provide attorneys to so  
17 many people who are qualifying for housing-- for

18 attorneys in Housing Court that lead to unnecessary  
19 evictions, and then of course, ultimately fill our  
20 shelters.

21 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council

22 Member. We are very proud of the Right to Counsel

23 Program. It is a flagship program and something that

24 we are investing in significantly. We're working

25 really closely with OMB to make sure that the funding

2 is aligned appropriately and that we're meeting all  
3 the needs. I would question the idea that we are  
4 failing to provide services. The majority of people  
5 who are income eligible, vast majority of people who  
6 are income eligible are receiving an attorney.  
7 There's also-- there is certainly room to do here for  
8 adjustment, but--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]

10 According to the data we reviewed, only 34 percent of  
11 tenants received an attorney in the first week of  
12 February of this year down from 55 percent in  
13 February of 2022. So we're seeing a significant  
14 reduction in the number of clients who need-- who  
15 need attorneys to stay in their homes year over year.  
16 That is scary, and it means more evictions and it  
17 means growing census in our shelter system.

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, that doesn't  
19 actually align with our data. So maybe we should  
20 talk offline and make sure we're in the same place.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Know that I am  
22 always happy to chat with you. I do appreciate your  
23 service. I'm pleased that you're in this role. You  
24 know, I was the Council Member you referenced who got  
25 a call at 10 o'clock at night about the new migrant

2 emergency shelter. We are, of course, we're here to  
3 support people in need and we'll-- have already  
4 visited the site. We'll continue to welcome them,  
5 but I am much more concerned about the congregate  
6 model of single adult shelters and want to see a  
7 greater approach on safe havens and for that to be  
8 applied more broadly across our district and the City  
9 as a whole. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, now we have  
11 the Majority Whip, Council Member Brooks-Powers.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: thank you,  
13 Chairs. Really quickly-- and hi Commissioner and to  
14 the team. I know my colleague had brought up Fair  
15 Fares. I have two questions on that, but I'm going  
16 to ask all my questions, because I want to make sure  
17 I get the answers for them. As far as Fair Fares,  
18 does the Administration believe that the current  
19 standard extends eligibility to enough New Yorkers?  
20 What provisions are made in this budget to improve  
21 outreach and increase the program's utilization? I  
22 also want to touch on the FHEPS program. There have  
23 been a number of reports over the last year of  
24 tenants being removed from their homes because DSS  
25 has not paid CityFHEPS vouchers on time. Even as

2 tenants that rely on CityFHEPS vouchers are paying  
3 their portion of the rent, the Executive Plan  
4 includes an additional \$160 million dollars in city  
5 funding for Fiscal Year 23 to meet the actual level  
6 of demand for CityFHEPS, but there was no baseline  
7 budget increase made pursuant to the Council's  
8 proposal and the budget in Fiscal 2024 and in the  
9 out-years remains well below recent actual spending.  
10 How specifically does this budget help DSS more  
11 effectively administrate the CityFHEPS program? And  
12 in the final area is regarding the asylum-seekers.  
13 As you know, we've had many conversations. I will  
14 like to attach my comments to Council Member Barron  
15 in terms of the need for greater equity in the  
16 sheltering system, because we have not seen fair  
17 shares as it pertains to shelter sitings. We have  
18 not received proper notification. As I mentioned when  
19 we spoke last week, I was just learning the two  
20 shelters about a month or two ago that was placed  
21 Beach 21<sup>st</sup> in Far Rockaway were actually asylum-  
22 seeker shelters, but even when it was sited, we did  
23 not get from that notification what the population  
24 was that was coming into the district. And New York  
25 must create and provide sufficient housing as we work

1  
2 to address the asylum crisis, especially for our most  
3 vulnerable populations, and there is an acute need  
4 for shelters in response to the ongoing asylum-seeker  
5 crisis. However, all New York's communities share  
6 the responsibility to help our neighbors and find  
7 shelter. Can you talk about how the Administration  
8 is ensuring that new shelters are being equitably  
9 distributed throughout the City neighborhoods? Does  
10 the City prioritize equity as a goal as it considers  
11 where to distribute shelter sites, and if so, how do  
12 you do that? And what provisions in this budget are  
13 made to ensure equitable distribution of shelter  
14 capacity citywide?

15 COMMISSIONER PARK: thank you, Council  
16 Member.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Oh, one  
18 last thing, I'm sorry. How many council districts  
19 are without shelters citywide?

20 COMMISSIONER PARK: Than you. A lot  
21 there. Let me do my best. If I miss something  
22 please let me know.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I will.

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, with respect to  
25 Fair Fares, we've certainly heard the feedback about

1 income eligibility. It is expanding to higher income  
2 levels, does come with a significant price tag. I do  
3 think it's something that should be addressed as part  
4 of the overall budget negotiations with the  
5 Administration, but we do take outreach to current  
6 eligibility standards very seriously. It's something  
7 we, you know, we do it in conjunction with Council  
8 Members. We do it in conjunction with the MTA.  
9 We're out at events. We're promoting it through  
10 Access HRA, sort of a host of different measures so  
11 that we can try and get the word out. If you-- we'd  
12 be happy to collaborate with you on outreach if that  
13 would be in your district, if that would be helpful.  
14 CityFHEPS renewals, there were some processing  
15 delays. It's something that we've been really  
16 focused on. We did a batch--

17  
18 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS:

19 [interposing] Sorry, really quickly before you move  
20 on off of Fair Fares. What provisions in the budget  
21 is existing right now to improve the outreach? So I  
22 understand that we can work together, but in the  
23 budget, how is the Administration supporting that  
24 need for that outreach?  
25

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, within the  
3 overall \$75 million dollars for Fair Fares, the  
4 portion of that is allocated to costs other than the  
5 actual transit subsidies. So that includes the  
6 personnel that run the program, postage for mailing  
7 the cards out, and then I think it's about \$2-2.5  
8 million dollars a year for outreach, and we're always  
9 looking for new and creative ways that we can get  
10 the-- use those funds to get the message out. Good?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER PARK: Great. CityFHEPS,  
13 there were some-- there were some processing delays.  
14 It's something we've been really focused on  
15 addressing. We did a substantial batch of auto  
16 renewals to make sure that we are-- that we are  
17 capturing everybody that we can and getting those  
18 removals in place. In addition, it's an area where  
19 we've been doing a lot of hiring and some process re-  
20 engineering to make sure that the work goes as  
21 smoothly as possible. With respect to the budget, as  
22 you've probably seen, the CityFHEPS budget has gone  
23 up quite rapidly in recent years. That's a  
24 combination of increased utilization and rising rent.  
25 So we work on a year-by-year basis to make sure that



2 we're adding-- with OMB to make sure that we're  
3 adding the amount that is appropriate for that year.  
4 So, the funds that you saw are to get us through this  
5 Fiscal Year and we'll work with OMB to adjust going  
6 forward. With respect to notification on asylum  
7 sites, it is very short. I wish that was not the  
8 case, but we are really very much working in real  
9 time on these emergency openings, but I hear the  
10 feedback about the content of the notifications, and  
11 we will certainly look at ways that we can improve  
12 that. Housing creation, I am entirely with you that  
13 we need more housing. We are actively looking for  
14 ways that DSS can collaborate with the housing  
15 agencies to do more housing development. One of the  
16 things that I am particularly excited about is that  
17 we're working with our housing partners on some hotel  
18 to housing permanent housing conversions, and we're  
19 looking at ways that we can continue to expand the  
20 role that social service dollars play in affordable  
21 housing dev. And with respect to shelters-- longer  
22 term shelter sitings and to the asylum sites, but  
23 they-- the long term. Equity is-- and distribution  
24 across the City is absolutely a focus. We are-- as  
25 we build our pipeline, one of the things that we

1 look, at is what is there and how do we make sure  
2 that we are getting sites in every single district.  
3 The-- you don't directly see that in the budget,  
4 right? There isn't a shelter siting equity budget  
5 line that I can point to, but one of the reasons that  
6 costs for shelter have continued to climb outside of  
7 the asylum-seekers is because are siting shelters in  
8 districts that never have been before, right? So we  
9 have a shelter on 57<sup>th</sup> Street. We have-- we're  
10 opening a shelter in SoHo right up to-- pointing some  
11 examples of districts that have not had shelters  
12 historically. Those-- the real estate costs there  
13 tend to be expensive, so you'll see climbing shelter  
14 costs, but we're-- we're committed to that. We are  
15 absolutely putting our money where our mouth is to  
16 make sure that we are siting shelters across the  
17 City. It is-- there is work to do, certainly, before  
18 it is equal across every district, but we are making  
19 progress in that direction.  
20

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: But when  
22 you put one shelter in SoHo, but then you have 13 in  
23 another district, that's not equity, right? And so  
24 before coming back to these districts that are  
25 saturated, I feel the Administration is failing to

1 identify those sites to make it more equitable. The  
2 Administration last year committed to not coming back  
3 to districts that have been saturated before making  
4 sure that other communities were sharing the same  
5 burden of the sheltering, and what I'm finding also  
6 is that even when we get the shelters, we are not  
7 getting the proper social service support for them,  
8 and as a result you see a lot of things that are  
9 spilling into the community impacting the community,  
10 but it's because they're not getting the services  
11 they need. So with the shelters sitings also, does  
12 the budget take into account the services that need  
13 to be coupled with it besides just placing bodies in  
14 shelters? Because they need mental health services.  
15 They need workforce development as has been said  
16 earlier, and I don't see that being prioritized  
17 either.

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
20 Member. Absolutely, all of our long-term shelters  
21 have wrap-around services. What those services look  
22 like varies depending on what population is being  
23 served, but there is core services around case  
24 managers, housing specialists that is at every site  
25 and then depending on the population there might be

1 on-site mental healthcare. There might be a focus on  
2 employment services. There might be childcare for  
3 the families with children sites.  
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: That's not  
6 what I'm hearing from the residents, because when  
7 they're in my community they become my constituents,  
8 and that's not the read out that I'm getting.

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: Okay. You know,  
10 certainly I know I owe you some information as part  
11 of that offline conversation, let's talk about the  
12 specifics. It is certainly on DHS' responsibility to  
13 make sure that we're doing adequate oversight, and if  
14 we need to be doing follow-up, we will make sure that  
15 that happens.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
17 Chair. And my one last question on the record-- I  
18 have a moratorium with the Administration to cease  
19 new shelter sitings in my district. Is that still  
20 active? Yes or no?

21 COMMISSIONER PARK: we are not placing  
22 new long-term sites there. We are in an  
23 unprecedented humanitarian emergency, and at this  
24 point we are looking at all our-- all options across  
25

2 not only the City, but frankly the state for how we  
3 are placing emergency sites.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: So does  
5 that mean that the moratorium is still in effect for  
6 my district?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: We are not placing  
8 new long-term shelters there.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: So is that  
10 a yes?

11 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
14 Sanchez?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so  
16 much, Chair, and good afternoon, right? Yes, been a  
17 couple of hours. Good afternoon everyone.

18 Commissioner, congratulations on your appointment.

19 Very excited to be working with you in this new  
20 capacity and with the entire team. I first just  
21 wanted to join in the remarks of maybe three or four  
22 of my colleagues here including Speaker Adams who  
23 have been talking about the timeliness rate at the  
24 Agency, your response that SNAP and cash assistance  
25 applications are up and all of that to say that, you

1 know, I just want to join in my colleagues saying  
2 that when we reach out to you directly because of a  
3 constituent issue, that's a problem. You know, we  
4 want to make sure that HRA, DSS, that you are  
5 staffing and, you know, I joined the Administration  
6 on a hiring haul in my district which was a huge  
7 success. We had 800 people roll through and  
8 presumably a lot of hires. Just want to be a partner  
9 in making sure that the Agency is staffing up because  
10 we can't have people going hungry and not receiving  
11 their benefits in time and all of the snow ball that  
12 happens with those. So, my question today is about  
13 the rental supplement program, New York State Rental  
14 Supplement Program. So, in last year's budget the  
15 State increased the State PHEPS [sic] rate to match  
16 CityFHEPS but did not provide for state funding to  
17 cover this increase. In December of 2021, the state  
18 allocated \$68 million under the rental supplement  
19 program to the City and then later indicated that it  
20 must be used toward the State PHEPS rate increase.  
21 RSP provides funding to supplement rental costs for  
22 low-income individuals regardless of their  
23 immigration status, which is something that of course  
24 this Council has been speaking with the  
25

1 Administration about in terms of City legislation.  
2 Many long time City residents who are undocumented  
3 and in the City shelter system are ineligible for  
4 housing assistance and vouchers, leaving them  
5 perpetually stuck in the City's shelter system. In  
6 the budget response, the Council called on the City  
7 to use any outstanding RSP funding after covering the  
8 cost of state PHEPS rate increase to support their  
9 creation of a program to provide rental assistance  
10 vouchers to undocumented city residents, but nothing  
11 was in the Executive Plan. So, a couple of  
12 questions. One, how much of the \$68 million has been  
13 spent to-date and on what? Two, how much does the  
14 City expect to spend in City fiscal year 2023 to  
15 cover the state PHEPS rate increase? Next, what is  
16 the estimated annual cost to the City of State PHEPS  
17 rate increase? Next and how much funding under RFP  
18 does HRA anticipate would remain and could be used  
19 toward vouchers for undocumented individuals? Is  
20 such a program being developed? And finally, are  
21 there any other pathways HRA is exploring to provide  
22 vouchers for those who are undocumented? If so,  
23 please detail.  
24  
25

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
3 Member, particularly for highlighting one of the  
4 significant areas of frustration for us, right? This  
5 claw-back RSP funding was applicable only to New York  
6 City, right? So it is really the City-- the state  
7 singling out New York City to take away funds that we  
8 absolutely need to be able to serve undocumented  
9 households living in the shelter system. So, it is--  
10 remains something that is a priority for us to try  
11 and reverse, and would certainly welcome your support  
12 in that process. In the meantime, we are working  
13 with the state on a program to be able to use the  
14 funds that aren't necessary. For State PHEPS to be  
15 able to roll out a program, we have to do it in  
16 accordance with the plan as approved by the state.  
17 That process is ongoing, and there isn't funding that  
18 will come to us until we have an approved plan with  
19 the State, which is why you don't see that in the  
20 budget. But we are working on it. Those numbers are  
21 under negotiation, but we will certainly circle back  
22 with you when we have final-- a final plan.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, thank you.  
24 Thank you so much.



2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Council Member  
3 Farías?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: I've been waiting  
5 so long. I was wondering when it was going to  
6 happen. Hi, everyone. Just some quick questions. I  
7 wanted to touch really quickly on a letter that I had  
8 sent over to you, Commissioner, in February on behalf  
9 of myself and Co-Chair Farah Louis for the Women's  
10 Caucus. We had Local Law Five, which at that point  
11 was intro 1085B passed at the end of 2021 that would  
12 require the Office of Civil Justice coordination to  
13 establish a two-year long pilot program to provide  
14 free legal brief assistance and full legal  
15 representation to domestic violence survivors in  
16 divorce proceedings. We sent in a letter just to  
17 request some specific data and questions. We haven't  
18 heard back yet, and you know, we do have some larger  
19 issues in our communities, especially with the  
20 increase in migrants. Just wanted to see if you had  
21 any updates for me and when I'll be receiving.

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
23 Member, and apologies for the delay. It arrived just  
24 as I was transitioning over, and it was issue that I  
25 need to get up to speed on. I think we will be in

2 touch shortly. I think it would be helpful if we  
3 could sit down and have a conversation.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: That'd be great.  
5 So I'll have our teams reach back out. And then I  
6 just have some questions from the long amount of  
7 testimony that you provided us so far. Are the  
8 employees providing social service to the asylum-  
9 seekers within the shelter unionized? Are they union  
10 members?

11 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the services  
12 provided to asylum-seekers are-- that's coming in a  
13 variety of different ways. Some of the-- in some  
14 sites we have providers on the ground who are  
15 directly providing services. They are going to--  
16 whether or not those employees are unionized vary--  
17 is going to vary provider by provider. I will say  
18 we've had a number of small and new providers really  
19 step up and provide extraordinary service in this  
20 moment of crisis. Because we are opening sites so  
21 very quickly, in some cases there-- although there  
22 was a provider attached to the site, they're not on  
23 the ground and providing services yet. In those  
24 cases we have services provided by a mix of city  
25 employees who are, of course unionized, National

2 Guard, and so that's a different situation,  
3 obviously, and in some cases temps.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, is there a-  
5 - do you have the percentage breakdown of like who  
6 are temporary or who's 1099, who's within the union,  
7 things like that?

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: I don't have that  
9 right now, but we can see what we can do and follow  
10 up.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Yeah, that would  
12 be helpful. And then in terms of management of  
13 movement of any unionized staff to emergency sites,  
14 how are we managing that? Is there like daily  
15 assignment? Are there permanent transfers?

16 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the agency staff  
17 that are working in the asylum sites right now are  
18 working voluntary over-time.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Got it. And is  
20 the agency fulfilling the requirements of the  
21 transfer clause and the collective bargaining  
22 agreements, and speaking with any of the unionized  
23 reps?

24  
25

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Because it's all  
3 voluntary overtime, we're not-- I think we're outside  
4 of that process. We're not transferring people.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Got it. Okay.  
6 And then you mentioned earlier the Right to Work  
7 policy. Is that just our regular standardized Right  
8 to Work or?

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: Worth authorization  
10 for asylum-seekers? Sorry, I just want to make sure  
11 I'm understanding correctly.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Lisa [sic] you  
13 men-- I believe that's when you mentioned that like--  
14 that there was a right to work policy, and I wasn't  
15 sure if that was directly related to our DSS, HRA,  
16 DHS staff members or if this was around-- I see some  
17 head shaking. Do you want to chime in?

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, just to make sure  
19 that-- I may have misspoke or might be  
20 misunderstanding, but the asylum-seekers largely do  
21 not at this point have work authorization. It takes  
22 some time to get-- to get work authorization, so we  
23 are working with them. We're helping them to connect  
24 to the legal services providers who can help with  
25 that application, with that process. But if it-- as

2 I consult with my colleagues, it turns out I've  
3 misunderstood the question. We'll certainly follow  
4 up.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, thank you  
6 so much.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we've been  
8 joined by Council Member Joseph, and to close us out,  
9 Council Member Williams with questions.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Last, but  
11 certainly not least. Thank you so much for being  
12 here and fielding all of our questions. I had a  
13 question about the SNAP and cash assistance benefits.  
14 We know that there's been significant delays in  
15 comparison to previous years. So are you able to  
16 tell us how many overdue SNAP and cash assistance  
17 applications are there currently?

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. Let me pull up  
19 those numbers. Let me start by saying as I'm pulling  
20 them up, that this is a place where we see quite  
21 significant fluctuation depending on the point in the  
22 month and other factors. We are-- so that being  
23 said, these are numbers as of May 2<sup>nd</sup>. We were-- had  
24 1,908 overdue SNAP cases. That's a combination of  
25

2 applications and re-certifications. On cash  
3 assistance it is 39,232. We are--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: [interposing] I'm  
5 sorry, 39,000 in the backlog?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yeah. We are-- this  
7 is absolutely an agency priority. We are staffing up  
8 very rapidly. I can tell you just as an example in  
9 this particular program, particularly on the cash  
10 assistance, we brought more people onboard on May 1<sup>st</sup>  
11 than we did in the entire month of March, right? We  
12 are full. It is a full court press to onboard staff.  
13 We are investing in technology. We are working very  
14 closely with the state on additional regulatory  
15 waivers. So this is something that, you know-- it  
16 would be too many if it was one household, and this  
17 is substantially too many. It is something we're  
18 taking very seriously, but we are-- it is an enormous  
19 priority for the agency.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: So, 1,098 on SNAP  
21 and 39,000?

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: It's 1,908, 1,908 on  
23 SNAP, 39,232 on cash.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Do you have a  
25 average fiscal impact on the clients?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, at the point at  
3 which it is-- the benefits are processed, they will--  
4 they'll get it retroactive to the date of the app--  
5 essentially, application. Eligibility for cash  
6 assistance, thank you, Administrator. Certainly,  
7 time matters. Retro doesn't help when you need to pay  
8 a bill right now, but the value of that varies  
9 depending on the household size and how much benefits  
10 that there are.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, the next  
12 question I have is on the asylum-seekers and the new  
13 office, Asylum-Seeker Operations and the Road  
14 Forward, are you able to share with us which city  
15 agency this new office will be located in and funded?  
16 Will it be under DHS? Who will lead the new office?  
17 Going forward with the role of DHS and HRA, what  
18 would the role be in DHS and HRA and even the  
19 Emergency Management that's not here? What role  
20 would they play in the response efforts, and will DHS  
21 continue to administer the emergency shelter  
22 contracts and oversee operations, or will that  
23 responsibility be moved to the new office?

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you. So, with  
25 respect to exactly where it's going to live, I'm

1  
2 going to have to defer that one. It is not within  
3 the DSS umbrella, and I think some of those decisions  
4 are still being made. I absolutely anticipate that  
5 this is going to remain a whole of government effort  
6 with a lot of different agencies at the table. I  
7 fully believe that DHS will remain a key player in  
8 this, but as sort of the theme running through many  
9 of the asylum conversations that we've had this  
10 morning, there's a lot of coordination work that  
11 needs to be done. It's a lot of effort by a lot of  
12 different people, so I think having that centralized  
13 role is going to be extremely helpful.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I don't have any  
15 more questions, just a comment in wanting to also  
16 attach my district and concerns that Council Member  
17 Barron, Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers, and I  
18 know I'm going to hold thread with you and the  
19 Speaker around shelters specifically in the southeast  
20 Queens community. As a whole and collective, we  
21 really don't see borders in southeast Queens. So  
22 when you look at our collective three council  
23 districts, it really is quite egregious the number of  
24 shelters we have and disproportionate to other  
25



2 council districts. So thank you so much for your  
3 testimony and answering my questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have  
5 Deputy Speaker Ayala for final questions. Oh, and  
6 we've been joined by Council Member Narcisse.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I have a final  
8 question, just because on Friday, I believe, we  
9 started getting calls regarding some evictions  
10 proceedings at Breaking Ground, and I was just  
11 wondering if you had any information on that. So,  
12 the-- there were 200 eviction filings since January  
13 of 2022, mostly for late pay or nonpayment of rent.  
14 Eighty percent of those cases are non-pay eviction  
15 filings. And this is obviously single supportive  
16 housing building in Times Square, actually the Times  
17 Square Motel. So have any resources been designated  
18 to help or--

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council  
20 Member. We take the stability of our clients very,  
21 very seriously. The return to shelter rate for  
22 individuals placed in subsidized housing is very low  
23 and we absolutely want to keep it that way. We're  
24 communicating closely with Breaking Ground. They  
25 overall have a very, very low eviction rate. I think

1  
2 it's 0.14 percent, something like that, across their  
3 portfolio. So I think this is-- this is not a fini--  
4 you know, end conclusion. This is a part of a  
5 process, and we will work with them and with the  
6 clients.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I appreciate that.  
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
10 Narcisse, you have a question?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good afternoon  
12 and thank you for the opportunity to ask a question.  
13 Mr. Brannan and all the team that here, thank you,  
14 and good afternoon. On the legal aspect of things,  
15 on the most pressing needs for the asylum-seeker  
16 population is legal assistance. What new legal  
17 services for asylum-seekers are contracted through  
18 HRA? What is the budget for each?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: thank you, Council  
20 Member. HRA is collaborating closely with agencies  
21 that are providing a variety of services. So there  
22 is funding in the-- in our budget that is designed  
23 for legal services, but that is MOIA. The Mayor's  
24 Office of Immigrant Affairs is taking the lead on  
25 that. In addition, the state has funding for legal

2 services for asylum-seekers and we will work closely  
3 with our state partners to ensure that those services  
4 are effective.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So you don't  
6 know the budget?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: There is one million  
8 this year for legal services. Again, MOIA is the  
9 lead agency there.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Got it. Are  
11 there any pending or planned RFPs? Please detail.  
12 What previously existing contracted legal services  
13 does HRA administer that support asylum-seekers?

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the Department of  
15 Social Services has an RFP out on the street right  
16 now for-- to find an entity or entities to do sort of  
17 a combination of light touch case work and some legal  
18 assessment to survey the asylum-seekers, find out  
19 where they are in the legal process, and help them to  
20 connect to the right services. So that is something  
21 that we are trying to bring on now. You know, and  
22 then within our larger not asylum specific, but  
23 within our larger legal services there is funding and  
24 resources available for immigrants. Again, this  
25 predated this particular asylum crisis.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. What is  
3 the budget for each? Has it increased over the last  
4 year?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, the budget, the  
6 FY24 budget for immigration legal services is-- this  
7 is a small font here. It's about \$27 million dollars  
8 in HRA's budget. I'm going to need to get back to  
9 you on the history of that funding stream.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, please  
11 do. Is HRA or OCI tracking the number of asylum-  
12 seekers who received legal aid? If so, how many?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: I can't answer that  
14 question, I'm sorry. I don't have that information.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: You don't have  
16 it. So, Chair? Thank you for your time.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,  
18 Commissioner. Thank you and your team so much.

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going  
21 to take a five-minute break, and then we'll hear from  
22 ACS.

23 [break]

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Can everyone settle  
25 down, take a seat please? Settle down.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good afternoon.

3 We're now ready to begin the second Executive Budget  
4 hearing of the day focused on the Administration for  
5 Children's Services. I'm Justin Brannan, Chair of  
6 the Committee on Finance. I'm still joined by my  
7 colleague, Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, Chair of the  
8 Committee on General Welfare. I want to welcome ACS  
9 Commissioner Dannhauser and your team for joining us  
10 today to answer our questions. ACS' projected 2024  
11 budget, 27-- sorry, \$2.72 billion represents 2.5  
12 percent of the Administration's proposed FY24 budget  
13 in the Executive Plan. This represents an increase  
14 of \$27.5 million or one percent from the \$2.7 billion  
15 budgeted in the Administration's FY24 Preliminary  
16 Plan. The increase comes from \$41.6 million dollars  
17 for additional personal services related funding for  
18 DC37 collective bargaining and workforce enhancement,  
19 and \$11.4 million in revenue realignment for  
20 detention revenue. ACS projected budget reflects a  
21 growth in headcount of six positions all within the  
22 Childcare Services program area. My questions today  
23 will largely focus on federal and state budget risks  
24 as well as funding and the workforce for childcare.

1  
2 I'll now turn it back to my Co-Chair Diana Ayala for  
3 her opening statement.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: A little enthusiasm,  
5 a little enthusiasm for ACS.

6 [applause]

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Wake up everybody,  
8 wake up. We've been here for a long time. Good  
9 afternoon everyone. I'm Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala,  
10 Chair of the Committee on General Welfare. We will  
11 now hold a committee joint hearing on the Fiscal 2024  
12 Executive Budget for the Administration for  
13 Children's Services for ACS. Thank you to Speaker  
14 Adams and Finance Chair Brannan for their leadership  
15 and their partnership throughout this budget process  
16 and during this hearing. A reminder to those  
17 watching that members of the public are invited to  
18 testify on Wednesday, May 24<sup>th</sup> and that you may visit  
19 the Council's website [council.nyc.gov](http://council.nyc.gov) to learn more.  
20 Welcome back to the Commissioner-- to Commissioner  
21 Dannhauser. Our work continues to protect and  
22 support New York City's children and families. ACS  
23 is the City's lead agency on child welfare and the  
24 work that it does lies at the intersection of  
25 poverty, racism, mental health, housing instability

1 and the availability of community-led resources. We  
2 must be laser-focused on building the infrastructure  
3 of care, compassion and treatment that is needed to  
4 help families thrive. ACS' Fiscal 2024 Executive  
5 Budget is \$2.7 billion, an increase of \$27.5 million  
6 or one percent from the Preliminary Budget. The  
7 increase is the result of two main actions, \$33.5  
8 million of personal service related funds as the  
9 result of the DC37 collective bargaining and \$11.4  
10 million of detention revenue realignment. Following  
11 a program to eliminate the gap in the Preliminary  
12 Plan that reduce interagency vacancy, the Executive  
13 Plan further includes six initiatives to save \$41  
14 million in Fiscal 2024 and in each of the out-years,  
15 including a \$7.2 million PEG to special childcare  
16 funding voucher that will eliminate or-- all current--  
17 - sorry, my glasses are a mess. I need new glasses.  
18 I want to-- to eliminate all current baseline funding  
19 by city tax levy. I want to ensure that the PEGs do  
20 not impact programs and services provided by the  
21 agency and would like to hear the Administration's  
22 plan to assist affected families who transitioned to  
23 state level childcare block grants and ensuring the  
24 benefits are continued. I am disappointed to see that  
25

1  
2 other childcare investments that the Council called  
3 for in this Preliminary Budget response did not get  
4 funded in the Executive Budget. This includes \$9.2  
5 million for FCCF [sic] vouchers to support low income  
6 families and \$10 million for Promise NYC to provide  
7 childcare services to undocumented children and their  
8 families. As the number of families seeking asylum  
9 arriving in New York City has risen, the need for  
10 Promise NYC has only increased. The Executive Plan  
11 did not fund these programs, but further eliminated  
12 the current baseline funding of FCCF entirely. The  
13 Executive Budget includes noteworthy swaths of \$102  
14 million in state and federal funding for city funds  
15 in Fiscal Year 23 due to revenue realignment.  
16 Additionally, we are awaiting information on \$7.6  
17 billion over four years and state funding for  
18 childcare will be rolled out in the City. I hope to  
19 hear more about the-- how the funds will maximize  
20 available dollars and fully invest in children's  
21 services and childcare even as federal and state  
22 funding should. Finally, ACS' Capital Commitment  
23 Plan for Fiscal 2023 through 2027 totals \$476  
24 million, \$48 million less than the Preliminary  
25 Capital Commitment Plan. Sixty percent of funding



2 supports construction projects at two secure  
3 detention facilities, and I look forward to hearing  
4 about when these educational recreational programming  
5 spaces will be available to detain youth. I kindly  
6 request the Commissioner please keep the testimony to  
7 10 minutes so that we can hear the Council Member  
8 questions. In addition to the topics above, we hope  
9 to discuss other issues such as alternatives to  
10 detention, foster care, and Family Court. I would  
11 like to thank the Committee Staff who have helped  
12 prepare this hearing, Austrid Chan [sp?], Finance  
13 Analyst, Alia Ali [sp?], Unit Head, Amenta Killawan  
14 [sp?], Senior Counsel, David Hometto [sp?], Counsel,  
15 and my Deputy Chief of Staff Elisy Carnacion [sp?].  
16 I will now pass it back to the Counsel to continue  
17 our hearing. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair  
19 Ayala, and I will have Committee Counsel swear in our  
20 witnesses.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Can  
22 you raise your right hands, please? Do you affirm  
23 that your testimony will be truthful to the best of  
24 your knowledge, information, and belief, and you will  
25

2 honestly and faithfully answer Council Member  
3 questions? Jess Dannhauser?

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I do.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Winette Saunders?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Margaret Pletnikoff?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: I do.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may  
10 begin.

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Good afternoon  
12 Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan, and members of  
13 the Council General Welfare and Finance Committees.  
14 My name is Jess Dannhauser, the Commissioner for the  
15 Administration for Children's Services, and I'm  
16 pleased to be here today to testify about the impact  
17 of the Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget and to share  
18 updates about the work we are doing to support New  
19 York City's children, youth and families. I'm joined  
20 today by Winette Saunders, our First Deputy  
21 Commissioner, and Margaret Pletnikoff, the Deputy  
22 Commissioner for Finance. ACS remains committed to  
23 build a city that is more safe, just and equitable  
24 for children, youth and families. Despite the need  
25 for ACS to be efficient and implement a four percent

2 CTL budget reduction to help the City maintain a  
3 balanced budget. ACS is continuing to build on our  
4 progress and will continue to be able to do so  
5 without negatively impacting the services and  
6 supports we provide to families. My testimony today  
7 will focus on our progress and the thoughtful  
8 decisions we've made to reduce spending with the  
9 least amount of impact for New Yorkers in need.  
10 Keeping children safe while supporting families is  
11 our core mission. ACS' Child Protective Specialists  
12 respond to nearly 60,000 reports accepted by the New  
13 York State-wide Central Register of alleged child  
14 abuse or neglect each year. In each of those  
15 instances, ACS and CPS are required to assess the  
16 safety of the children and when necessary connect  
17 families to supports or services. In 2022, ACS  
18 sought court intervention in eight percent of the  
19 investigations and three percent of the  
20 investigations led to a child removal and placement  
21 in foster care, both significant down from pre-  
22 pandemic levels. Child welfare work is nuanced and  
23 complex, as every family situation is unique. CPS  
24 needs support, training, supervision and manageable  
25 caseloads to be able to quality assessments. We are

1 regularly hiring and training new classes. 122 new  
2 CPS started this February, and we have another class  
3 of 130 new CPS starting this month. This is  
4 essential so that we can maintain caseloads well  
5 below the national standard. ACS' case load average  
6 is approximately 10, on national standards raised  
7 from 12 to 15. Our CPS are highly-trained  
8 individuals and we have enhanced our training over  
9 the past several years based on lessons learned  
10 through a comprehensive quality management processes.  
11 Our new simulated training site for child welfare  
12 workers provides CPS training in mock apartments and  
13 a mock courtroom which gives CPS a more realistic  
14 sense of what it's like to conduct home visits during  
15 investigations and interview parents and children.  
16 At the sites, parents and children are played by  
17 actors who role play elements in actual cases that  
18 have come to our attention. We also deploy staff  
19 development coordinators in Child Protection Borough  
20 Offices to bridge the transition for new staff from  
21 initial training to practices and coaches to support  
22 supervisors and managers to help them reinforce the  
23 extensive training programs. We've also expanded our  
24 coaching and quality assurance efforts through ASAP  
25

1 [sic] which examines child safety practice during  
2 open investigations involving children at elevated  
3 risk of physical or sexual abuse. The quality  
4 assurance team reviews open cases in real time in  
5 collaborating with Child Protect staff when safety  
6 interventions are needed, and providing coaching to  
7 CPS to help strengthen casework practice. I want to  
8 introduce our new Deputy Commissioner for Child  
9 Protection Joan Cleary who is with us today. Joan  
10 for the past several years has been leading our  
11 Brooklyn West office, has been a leader in growing  
12 CARES and she started last month after the retirement  
13 of William Fletcher for-- who's been with the agency  
14 for 37 years. At the same time that we've expanded  
15 and strengthened our coaching and quality assurance  
16 mechanisms in high-risk cases, we're working with  
17 Deputy Mayor Willams-Isom on a citywide strategy to  
18 reduce the number of unnecessary child welfare  
19 investigations and replace reports where appropriate  
20 with upstream family supports. We believe this is  
21 how we can reduce the number of families experiencing  
22 the formal child protection system, prevent child  
23 maltreatment, and help families feel comfortable and  
24 safe enough to ask for and receive help. A key  
25

2 component of our work to narrow the front door and  
3 reduce unnecessary calls to the SCR is educating  
4 mandated reporters in the ways to provide support to  
5 families without making an unnecessary report to the  
6 SCR. This past summer, ACS worked with the New York  
7 City Public Schools to revise their annual training  
8 which we then jointly provide to the staff from over  
9 1,800 schools. the training focuses on helping  
10 public schools staff understand the impact of making  
11 a report, the need to focus on objective facts, and  
12 be aware of implicit bias when deciding what to  
13 report and how to access resources available to  
14 families citywide without making a report. Later  
15 this week I am meeting with the superintendents to  
16 reinforce this important message. We're also  
17 tailoring and expanding this work to other city  
18 agencies with mandated reporters such as the  
19 Department of Homeless Services, and we are working  
20 more closely with medical staff. We are also  
21 continuing to expand CARES, our non-investigative  
22 child protection response to low-risk cases referred  
23 to ACS from the SCR. From 21 to 22 there was a 72  
24 percent increase in the number of CARES responses.  
25 In March of 23 we created two more CARES units to now

1  
2 48 CARES units, and we anticipate creating an  
3 additional 16 units by the end of this year. in  
4 CARES, specially trained Child Protective staff  
5 assess the safety of the children and then partner  
6 with family to identify their needs, empower them to  
7 make decisions that address their needs and the needs  
8 of the children and connect families to appropriate  
9 services, all without the need of a formal Child  
10 Welfare investigation and determination that will  
11 remain on someone's Child Protection record. ACS  
12 contracts with community-based nonprofit providers  
13 for both child welfare prevention and foster care  
14 services. I want to take a moment to thank our  
15 provider partners for all the work that their staff  
16 do on behalf of New York City's children and  
17 families. With regard to prevention services, we've  
18 been taking important steps to move services upstream  
19 so that families can access the services long before  
20 there's a need for traditional Child Welfare response  
21 or intervention. After surveying thousands of  
22 families who participated in prevention services,  
23 2022 annual family experience survey once again that  
24 families were overwhelmingly satisfied with the  
25 services. Approximately 94 percent of survey

1 participants said they were happy with the prevention  
2 services their family received, and 90 percent said  
3 they would recommend the services to a friend or  
4 family member. ACS currently contracts for  
5 approximately 12,500 Child Welfare Prevention slots.  
6 There's no wait list and families in need can be  
7 connected to services in their community. As  
8 proposed in the Executive Budget, ACS had conducted a  
9 comprehensive assessment and are re-estimating to be  
10 able to realize a savings of \$3.2 million in CTL,  
11 \$8.5 million gross through a careful review of  
12 utilization rates and spending patterns. ACS looks  
13 forward to continuing to work with our foster care  
14 and residential providers as we enter into new  
15 contracts July 1<sup>st</sup>. Executive Budget includes \$47.2  
16 million for ACS to fund the increased foster parent  
17 and adoption subsidies to the new rates which will  
18 be-- while appreciated, remain unfunded mandate from  
19 the state. This past year we have continued to see  
20 our work on behalf of children in foster care move in  
21 the right direction. Over half of children entering  
22 foster care are placed with family or close friends,  
23 and the percentage of youth in care placed with kin  
24 continues to increase and is now 45 percent. In  
25



1  
2 addition, the number of children in foster care is at  
3 all-time low, and the percentage of children in  
4 foster care who are long-stayers has decreased. In  
5 FY23 ACS was able to leverage additional funds to  
6 support strength in foster care services. Service  
7 enhancements included the launch of a new trauma-  
8 informed training for foster parents and the  
9 integration of parent advocates into our Enhanced  
10 Family Foster Care Program along with workforce  
11 enhancements for our providers. We've also seen a  
12 great deal of success in our implementation of  
13 initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for youth in  
14 foster care such as Fair Futures and College Choice.  
15 In FY23, the Fair Futures program has already served  
16 a total of 3,451 young people ages 11 to 26, a  
17 significant increase from under 3,000 served in  
18 Fiscal Year 22. And actually, more recent numbers  
19 suggest we have now over 3,700. Of youth served in  
20 FY23, 2,200 were coaches including additional 263  
21 youth in the older age range of 18 to 26 years old,  
22 which actually as of this week is over 400 young  
23 people in that age. To date, in FY 23 Fair Futures  
24 funded over 400 additional staff to provide coaching,  
25 mentoring, and supports youth. Launched in July 22,

1  
2 College Choice enhanced ACS' support for youth in  
3 foster care attending college by giving youth more  
4 flexibility and options. As part of College Choice,  
5 ACS pays for tuition and room and board fees that are  
6 not covered by financial aid at whatever college the  
7 youth chooses to attend. ACS also provides youth  
8 with \$60 per day to cover food and other living and  
9 college-related expenses while they are attending  
10 school and for up to six months after graduation.  
11 Youth also receive coaching, tutoring and career  
12 counseling for the New York Foundling [sic] and our  
13 Fair Futures. There are currently 300 youth in  
14 college accessing College Choice benefits, up from  
15 200 last year. We're happy announce that we  
16 currently have 25 youth graduating from college in  
17 May, we remain focused on keeping children safe by  
18 ensuring their families have the resources they need  
19 to thrive. Much of this work is done in  
20 collaboration with other city agencies, as meeting  
21 the needs of children and families really does take a  
22 village, or as the Mayor says, the City. Since our  
23 last budget hearing, many of the first nine new  
24 Family Enrichment Centers have opened the doors and  
25 have also begun working deeply with community

1 members. We're so pleased with the community  
2 collaboration and engagement we've seen with these  
3 new FECs, and we're excited to watch them grow in to  
4 the community treasures three original FECs and  
5 become in their respective neighborhoods. These past  
6 few months we've also made important efforts to  
7 protect unintentional child injuries related to  
8 cannabis-infused edibles and window guards by  
9 focusing on education and outreach to families and  
10 child-serving professionals. Following an increase  
11 in the number of children being treated in New York  
12 City emergency rooms due to unintentional exposure to  
13 cannabis-infused edibles which are often made to  
14 closely resemble popular brand name candy and sacks  
15 with nearly identical package, ACS launched a new  
16 safety campaign aimed at educating caregivers on the  
17 need to keep cannabis-infused products locked away  
18 and out of reach of children and to call the NYC  
19 Poison Center if they suspect that a child has eaten  
20 something containing cannabis. The week of March  
21 20<sup>th</sup> was National Poison Prevention Week and we  
22 collaborated with partners to host information  
23 resource fairs including at a licensed cannabis  
24 dispensary. At the fairs we shared information about  
25

1 the risk and symptoms of poisoning in children, offer  
2 guidance of what to do if a child's been exposed and  
3 provided lock boxes to make sure that families had  
4 the resources they need to protect their children.  
5 We know that access to childcare is essential for  
6 families. This past year, we've made tremendous  
7 progress and increased the number of children  
8 receiving childcare assistance including for the  
9 first time ever for undocumented children through  
10 FY23 funding for Promise NYC. We have dramatically  
11 expanded the number of families getting help for  
12 childcare. Today, compared to a year ago, 11,000  
13 more low-income children are enrolled in care with  
14 the support of a voucher, and we are working hard to  
15 ensure families living in the highest need areas  
16 understand and can access the full range of childcare  
17 options. This is why we focused outreach on the 17  
18 community districts across the City with the highest  
19 poverty and highest unemployment. Since Mayor Adams  
20 announced his childcare blueprint this past summer,  
21 the number of low-income children in ECD's [sic]  
22 using a voucher to attend childcare has increased by  
23 126 percent. We have also taken steps to stabilize  
24 childcare providers by working with the state to  
25

1  
2 increase the maximum reimbursement for providers, and  
3 then we made it easier for providers to apply for the  
4 higher rates. So far, over 4,000 New York City  
5 childcare providers have been approved for higher  
6 rates. We also streamlined the process for childcare  
7 providers to sign up to serve to children receiving  
8 vouchers, substantially reducing the amount of  
9 paperwork involved. We hope efforts like this will  
10 increase our partnership of providers and in turn  
11 give families more options. Working with our city  
12 partners, we also made it easier to apply for  
13 childcare assistance by making the childcare  
14 application the first city service application  
15 available through the new My City Portal. Through My  
16 City, families can apply for childcare assistance  
17 available for multiple agencies and easily upload  
18 their supporting documents. As part of the Executive  
19 Budget, ACS is able to realize \$7.2 million CTL  
20 savings by moving eligible families from FCCF city-  
21 funded vouchers to federally funded CCBG vouchers.  
22 Importantly, the eligibility requirements for both  
23 FCCF and CCB vouchers are the same. ACS is committed  
24 to providing young people across the juvenile justice  
25 continuum with opportunities and skills they need to

1 thrive. We have continued to see tremendous progress  
2 in the past few months. Despite the increase in the  
3 number of youth in our secure detention facilities,  
4 we are seeing the number of incidents decrease. At  
5 the end of April, the Nunez Monitors, a group of  
6 juvenile justice experts that ACS voluntarily agreed  
7 to work with in support of our reform efforts,  
8 released their most recent report on Horizon and  
9 found that ACS has made strides in reducing the rate  
10 of violence at Horizon. The Monitors recognize our  
11 new and stronger leadership, the significant  
12 reductions in youth violence, and the substantial  
13 efforts to improve facility function and provide an  
14 array of programs to the youth. We are taking  
15 important steps to increase the staffing levels of  
16 both Horizon and Crossroads, and the first quarter of  
17 FY23 we brought 78 new YDS on board. While the  
18 census in secure detention is higher than last year,  
19 detention emissions are actually down 18 percent  
20 since the implementation of Raise the Age, and 2022  
21 admissions were lower than 2019. This increase in  
22 census is largely due to the increased length of pre-  
23 adjudication stays in detention, often due to the  
24 complex legal cases many of the youth are facing.  
25

1 While we have a long way to go in our work there, we  
2 are seeing progress. Since our last budget hearing,  
3 we issued recommended awards for two important  
4 programs that will help connect youth to programs and  
5 services aimed to helping them thrive. First, with  
6 the alternative to detention contracts moving from  
7 MOCJ to ACS on July 1<sup>st</sup>, ACS selected cases from  
8 Manhattan and the Bronx, Justice Innovation Center  
9 for Queens and Staten Island, and Good Shepherd  
10 Services for Brooklyn. These new contracts will  
11 strengthen the ATD programs by adding a court liaison  
12 to connect with young people in the court room,  
13 develop individualized supervision plans tailored to  
14 each youth's needs and goals, offer workforce  
15 development internships and stipends, and connect  
16 youth to Fair Futures coaches and support. We also  
17 recommended Children's Village in Bard College for  
18 awards for our new workforce development program.  
19 Through these new contracts, the providers are  
20 offered career exploration, work readiness,  
21 vocational education training, college access, and  
22 life skills for justice-involved young people. These  
23 contracts also include the expansion of Fair Futures  
24 to youth and detention. The Executive Budget  
25

2 proposes to continue to right size the Close to Home  
3 placement system for youth sentenced to placement by  
4 the Family Court. ACS will realize savings of \$3.9  
5 million CTL in FY24 and \$4 million in the out-years  
6 by closing one of our limited secure placement sites.  
7 The site has capacity for 16 girls, but has not  
8 served the youth for over a year. It's closure will  
9 not impact our ability to ensure safety for young  
10 people in the community. ACS is also required to  
11 reimbursement the state OCFS for the cost of juvenile  
12 justice placements of adolescent offenders and  
13 juvenile offenders in their facilities. ACS regularly  
14 has a large annual surplus of these allocated funds,  
15 so the Executive Budget produces to reduce these  
16 funds by \$7.1 million, continuing to leave us with  
17 over \$15 million should we need the funding. In FY23  
18 we estimated reimbursing the state for the placement  
19 of 75 youth. The Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 24  
20 proposes to fund ACS at \$2.72 billion, including \$856  
21 million of city tax levy. This includes \$104 million  
22 in new needs for Fiscal Year 24 to fund the increased  
23 rate for childcare providers about \$57 million, and  
24 foster parent/adopted parents subsidies \$47 million.  
25 The Executive Budget also includes the funds for ACS



2 to meet the collective bargaining agreement between  
3 the City and DC37. Many ACS staff such as CPS and YDS  
4 are hard-working members of DC37, and we're grateful  
5 to the Mayor, the Office of Labor Relations in DC37  
6 for the recent contract agreement that recognizes  
7 their critical work. Like most city agencies, ACS'  
8 FY24 PEG target was four percent or approximately \$33  
9 million of city tax levy in Fiscal Year 24 and  
10 baselined thereafter. ACS took a careful and  
11 thoughtful approach to identifying efficiencies and  
12 other ways to reduce our budget in a manner that  
13 would not have a negative impact on the children,  
14 youth and families we serve. In addition to the re-  
15 estimates for prevention services Close to Home, OCFS  
16 placements and FCCF vouchers previously discussed,  
17 ACS is also proposed to reduce our budget for DCP  
18 Family Court mental health due to history  
19 underspending and the Cumberland Substance Use  
20 Disorder Program MOU which was not being used by ACS  
21 clients. In conclusion, I want to thank the staff of  
22 ACS and our provider agencies for the work that they  
23 do each and every day on the behalf of the children,  
24 youth, and families of New York City. While this  
25 Executive Budget required ACS to look closely at our

2 spending, I'm confident that our proposed budget for  
3 Fiscal Year 24 will help us to continue to move ACS  
4 in the right direction as we support children and  
5 families. We look forward to your questions.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,  
7 Commissioner. One thing I picked up on in your  
8 testimony, it says here, "ACS has also proposed to  
9 reduce our budget for DCP Family Court mental health  
10 due to historic under-spending." Will you explain to  
11 me what that means?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure. So, there  
13 was a program in Family Courts where families could  
14 have evaluations for mental health treatment.  
15 Working with their attorneys, often they did not want  
16 to use that mental health provider. They felt like  
17 it was our provider, and so there's been under-  
18 utilization and they're getting those services and  
19 evaluations elsewhere, often with the support of  
20 their attorneys. So there's just been historic  
21 underspending, and it's just bringing it down to that  
22 level.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So the families  
24 felt it was biased in some way because it was  
25 provided by ACS?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's our  
3 assumption, and the-- working with the attorneys  
4 we've been able to get those evaluations in a  
5 different place.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Childcare  
7 funding, what estimate does ACS have for how much  
8 additional funding including through the Childcare  
9 Block Grant will eventually be reflected in the FY24  
10 budget?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we're  
12 working with the assumption that the state has  
13 dedicated an allocation of \$4 billion over four  
14 years. So we are in the process of expanding voucher  
15 enrollment rapidly. As I mentioned in my testimony,  
16 we're up over 11,000 families in low-income vouchers.  
17 It's about 1,300 a month-- excuse me, 11,000  
18 children. 1,300 children more a month is the pace  
19 we're on right now. So we're expecting to be able to  
20 expand that significantly.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do we have a  
22 ballpark estimate for how many more families you  
23 think we'll be able to provide vouchers to with the  
24 expanded requirements?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Our hope is to  
3 be able to get to about 40,000 using low-income  
4 vouchers.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Got it, okay. The  
6 Childcare Workforce-- the FY24 state budget utilizes  
7 \$500 million in underutilized federal funds to create  
8 the Workforce Retention Grant Program. What estimate  
9 does ACS have for how much additional funding will  
10 eventually be reflected in the budget as a result of  
11 that support?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Given the way  
13 this has been done historically, we expect none of  
14 that to come through ACS, but that the state has  
15 typically invested it directly in the workforce. The  
16 workforce for ACS really is around-- what we can do  
17 is really work on making sure childcare providers are  
18 getting rate adjustments, and so we have improved the  
19 rates of 4,000 providers this past year and are  
20 working with other providers, about half, to make  
21 sure that they are benefitting from the rate  
22 adjustments that the state made. So it's two  
23 separate-- the \$500 million, we're still waiting to  
24 understand from the state, but typically they've made  
25 those investments directly, but for us childcare--

2 you know, we just do the voucher part of the program  
3 and the rate setting for providers.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How would that  
5 funding affect hiring and-- hiring efforts and  
6 retaining current employees?

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, most of  
8 that is done through-- all of that is done through  
9 the Department of Education. So, I'll defer to them  
10 on that. For the childcare providers, so these are  
11 family-based providers-- we can only imagine that's  
12 going to be very helpful. The many of them have gone  
13 through the process. We've streamlined the process.  
14 Those rates are really key to having their small  
15 businesses thrive. So, we've been really, really  
16 reaching out to them to make sure they have what they  
17 need.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What has been the  
19 bigger challenge for ACS, the PEGs or the vacancies?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I would say the  
21 vacancies. I think we are very focused on hiring.  
22 We're very focused on understanding our staff's  
23 experience, making sure that we're going through  
24 processes to listen to them. I regularly do town  
25 halls in detention. I've been out to all of our

2 sites. What I hear from staff is that they love the  
3 work, that they would appreciate a little bit less  
4 on-- onerous around things like documentation, so  
5 we're really trying to look at how to simplify some  
6 of the processes that we have, and we've made some  
7 progress in that regard. We've got a lot of really,  
8 really dedicated staff, and so we're seeing some  
9 progress in detention. This Fiscal Year we have a  
10 net 41 YDS. We're also seeing a lot more special  
11 officers come on. We've got classes of 122 in  
12 February for CPS, 130 this month. We know that the  
13 core of this is making sure that our staff have the  
14 experience and support that they need. So, we're  
15 also making sure leadership is active and available  
16 to staff and responsive to them.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The State  
18 Comptroller released a report that estimated that  
19 would cost ACS about \$120 million dollars a year  
20 related to the termination of the 4E waiver. What  
21 are the anticipated gaps, and how does the  
22 Administration plan to use city funds to backfill  
23 those expenses?

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, we're  
25 constantly working with this and OMB. They added

2 some money earlier this year to our Fiscal Year 23  
3 budget to cover that. They have been clear that  
4 they're going to cover it and there's not going to be  
5 an impact to foster care services. It's an ongoing  
6 analysis, in part because it depends on the  
7 eligibility of families. It's based on a very old  
8 standard at the federal level, and it's also driven  
9 by the census of children in foster care which has  
10 continued to come down, so we are regularly updating  
11 that analysis and in conversations with them.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The Close to Home  
13 initiative, the state budget proposes Article VII  
14 legislation that would make it-- make the initiative  
15 permanent. However, there was no funding included for  
16 its operation. I understand the state budget  
17 eliminated all funding for Close to Home for the City  
18 since 2018, I believe.

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It's a real  
20 disappointment.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, what's the--  
22 what's the plan there? How do we fund that  
23 operation?

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, there is  
25 some federal dollar in there, and the rest is city

2 tax levy. We really think that the state should be  
3 carrying a piece of that responsibility. We are in  
4 this budget taking down one site. So we've had  
5 underutilization of the Close to Home program which  
6 is a good thing. We have about 12 children in our  
7 limited secure program, and so where this budget  
8 brings us down to about 50 at capacity. We always  
9 want to make sure we have the capacity for young  
10 people, but over the past couple years we've been  
11 bringing down that capacity to be more in-line with  
12 the census.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Going over to  
14 Deputy Speaker Ayala for questions. Thank you,  
15 Commissioner.

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you,  
17 Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you, Chair  
19 Brannan. Good afternoon, Commissioner.

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Good afternoon.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, so my first  
22 question is regarding Promise NYC. So we know we  
23 launched it earlier this year to provide much-needed  
24 childcare assistance to low-income families and  
25 undocumented children. Accessibility to appropriate



2 childcare is critical to families who are often just  
3 one missed paycheck from homelessness. ACS includes  
4 \$10 million for this program in Fiscal Year 2023  
5 only. How many families are currently benefitting  
6 from this funding as of May 2023, and what is the  
7 target number of children enrolled by the end of the  
8 Fiscal Year?

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you,  
10 Deputy Speaker. Promise has been a major success.  
11 We were thrilled to be able to get it up and running  
12 quickly with community-based providers. At the  
13 outset, the target for Promise NYC was 600 children.  
14 We have reached that number and eclipsed that  
15 numbers, and so we've paused on enrollments and we  
16 are in discussions with OMB about how important this  
17 program is.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. How much of the  
19 \$10 million has been reimbursed?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We estimate by  
21 the end of the year for the 600+ children that are  
22 enrolled is going to be somewhere around \$7 million.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: \$7 million?

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes.  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And since the  
3 Preliminary Budget, have you had conversations with  
4 OMB to expand Promise NYC in Fiscal Year 24?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are in  
6 ongoing conversations with them, yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do we know for how  
8 much more funding? Or how much would-- how much more  
9 would we need?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are  
11 discussing that with them. We're looking at the  
12 projections. Obviously, we are thrilled that we were  
13 able to get so many children enrolled quickly, and  
14 you know, it took a little-- in the start of the very  
15 beginning of last Fiscal Year because of federal  
16 rules we had to go through. Our community-based  
17 organizations which ended up being a real blessing,  
18 they were able to enroll families very quickly. So  
19 we're looking at those numbers and understanding from  
20 the providers how many other additional families were  
21 reaching out.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's great. Do  
23 families apply for Promise directly through ACS or  
24 with one of the contractors?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Through one of  
3 the contractors.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And in the  
5 Council's budget response, the Council called on the  
6 Administration to baseline \$10 million for Promise  
7 NYC. Why is this funding not included in the  
8 Executive Budget?

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Simply because  
10 of the realities of the fiscal picture for the City.  
11 We think it's an important program, but obviously  
12 we've had to make very difficult decisions and we're  
13 in ongoing conversations with OMB about this.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. I mean, I get  
15 it, but again, as I stated in the beginning, for my  
16 questioning. May families unfortunately depend on  
17 this, right, to be able to be self-sufficient, to be  
18 able to work, to be able to pay rent. So in the  
19 long-run it may-- you know, the short-run it may seem  
20 expensive, and the long-run is actually cost  
21 efficient to the city. We're keeping, you know,  
22 families out of the shelter system and off, you know,  
23 of public benefits they didn't-- if they don't need  
24 them. Okay. Close to Home, the PEG program's  
25 reflecting cuts to the agency's budget total \$41

1 million in Fiscal Year 23 to right-sizing Close to  
2 Home beds which the Council has previously called  
3 for. The Executive Plan cuts 16 beds in the Close to  
4 Home at \$4 million in Fiscal Year 2024 and beyond.  
5 The remaining-- the remaining 250 beds, although the  
6 census is less than 50. Are there additional savings  
7 that can be made in Close to Home, and what's the  
8 estimate?  
9

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we are able  
11 to save from that-- the 16 bed reduction, we're able  
12 to make an additional cut earlier this year, and we  
13 brought down some NSP. So Close to Home is both our  
14 non-secure placement and our limited-secure  
15 placement. So we have been reducing from over 200 on  
16 the NSP side to 171, and on the LSP side we're going  
17 from 66 to 50. LSP has 12 kids in it right now. We  
18 always have to have capacity, so we are being a  
19 little bit cautious, but we are also in the process  
20 of an RFP which we are-- intend to launch this spring  
21 to providers, and we're in the process of looking at  
22 that very question with OMB about what the size and  
23 structure should be.  
24  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Am I reading this  
3 correct? Does it cost \$4 million dollars to keep the  
4 16 extra beds?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, that's  
6 correct. That's correct.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: What's in these beds?  
8 Like what are you offering? That's a lot of money.

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Will ACS consider  
11 adding those savings back into the better community-  
12 based prevention programs like alternatives to  
13 detention?

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are excited  
15 to be taking on the alternatives to detention  
16 programs and launching the workforce component of the  
17 work. So it is not a direct reinvestment, but we are  
18 always looking for ways to move funding upstream.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you have an update  
20 on the Close to Home RFP?

21 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are going to  
22 be releasing it this spring and having conversations  
23 with OMB right now about it.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Would you be able to  
25 share how many providers would be awarded?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have not  
3 made that decision yet. We're trying to determine  
4 the exact capacity and assess what the right balance  
5 is between ensuring we have that capacity and moving  
6 some of those resources further upstream.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. ACS will  
8 generate a savings of \$8.5 million in Fiscal Year  
9 2024 and the out-years through right-sizing the  
10 preventive slots of the preventive services program.  
11 Additionally, the Preliminary Mayor's Management  
12 Report showed that preventive services slot  
13 utilization was trending downward. Do preventive  
14 services include mental health counseling, and how do  
15 parents know that they can access these services  
16 voluntarily?

17 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, some of  
18 them do. It depends on the type of prevention. So  
19 we have a cadre of preventive slots that we call  
20 Family Support. This is general case management. We  
21 also have a series of evidence-based family treatment  
22 services that provide mental health supports. We  
23 also have a program that focuses on families that are  
24 struggling with mental health and substance abuse  
25 challenges. Well, we're-- right now we have a

2 contract capacity for 12,500 slots. We're currently  
3 using about 8,000 of that. Many of that-- much of  
4 that is due to the pandemic, but we're doing an  
5 analysis to see where there's been some chronic  
6 under-utilization. We have, you know, over-saturated  
7 a particular community or under-saturated another.  
8 So our Division of Prevention Services, Policy  
9 Planning and Management, and Finance Teams, we're  
10 looking at the best way to bring down about 4-500  
11 slots. So we would still have an additional 4,000  
12 unused slots. We are seeing that preventive  
13 providers are enrolling more families in the past few  
14 months. I think some of that's bringing on more  
15 workforce and we're working with them to provide lots  
16 of flexibilities to move further upstream to get to  
17 families, as I was I mentioning earlier, before an  
18 SCR call. So, all that combined we think it's safe  
19 to bring down some of these slots in chronically  
20 under-utilized areas, while continuing to try to  
21 expand the number of families we're serving there  
22 upstream. If we get to a position where we had a  
23 wait list or anything like that, we could certainly  
24 work with OMB to reconsider that, but we do not right  
25 now. We are trying to make sure families are aware

2 that they can access preventive voluntarily. It's a  
3 key feature of our system that dates back to an  
4 advocates settlement, and families can not only  
5 access them voluntarily, but it's a very different  
6 oversight than a family who's accessing through a  
7 formal child protection investigation.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, so but mental  
9 health services are part of the programming package,  
10 right?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: They are. They  
12 area.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you know--

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [interposing]  
15 Sorry.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Does that include--  
17 because I know you and I have had this conversation  
18 many times about the post-partum psychosis, and is  
19 that part of the program as well?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We've been  
21 doing training for all of our staff on post-partum  
22 depression and psychosis, the whole range of anxiety  
23 and depression disorders after pregnancy. So we are  
24 making sure that everybody has a skillset in that.  
25 There's not a dedicated program, but we are working



2 with providers who are expert in that, working with  
3 our Health + Hospitals to make sure that we can  
4 identify it and treat it.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. There used to  
6 be a VNS program that went to the home when you are  
7 like a first-time mom or a mother and, you know, in  
8 need of additional resources. Does ACS work with  
9 that program?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We do. We have  
11 a referral process where we refer families to the  
12 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and then  
13 step away so that families feel comfortable--

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] Yeah.

15 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: in accessing  
16 them. We're looking at ways to continue to expand  
17 referrals to that, because it's a key partnership.  
18 We also have our own set of home-making and in-home,  
19 home-based services that is in our division of  
20 prevention services, and those can be supportive in  
21 such a circumstance as well.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, I really  
23 appreciate that. I think this is a vital resource.  
24 Regarding workforce development, what's the current  
25 caseload per worker at ACS?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Assuming that  
3 you're referencing Child Protective Services, it's a  
4 little over 10.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Ten cases, okay. And  
6 what has ACS done specifically for workforce  
7 development?

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we are  
9 focused on a whole range of initiatives. We are  
10 obviously thrilled that the Mayor's Office and DC37  
11 came to an agreement that affects over 4,100 of our  
12 staff. So that is a major investment in the  
13 hardworking staff at ACS. We're also looking a  
14 variety of ways we can support them, provide for lots  
15 of opportunities to-- if they an experience where  
16 they need trauma counseling, where they need support,  
17 we are making sure that we're providing that. As I  
18 mentioned earlier, we're also looking at a process to  
19 try to simplify some of the processes and  
20 documentation requirements to really focus on the  
21 child and family needs in front of them. But from a  
22 series of recommendations over many, many, many  
23 years, we've created a pile of things that workers  
24 have to sort of work through. I don't think it  
25 improves our practice. In fact, I think it's a

2 detriment to it, and so we've been working over the  
3 past year to simplify many of those. Our new Deputy  
4 Commissioner is very committed to this, having been  
5 running a borough at the ground level, and it's going  
6 to bring some great ideas to that as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is ACS providing any  
8 mental health services or support to staff?

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We do. we  
10 provide-- through a provider, a contract provider, we  
11 provide-- offer after any type of major incident, our  
12 staff, trauma supports, some of them access them  
13 through that. We also through our EAP have a wide  
14 range of services. And so depending on-- we also can  
15 do group trauma counseling if folks have been through  
16 something together. So we are always looking to  
17 offer that. Many of our staff would rather access it  
18 privately, as you can understand, and so we support  
19 that as well.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So they're volunteer?  
21 Or you have to-- you have to be willing.

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's right.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. That's  
24 interesting because I see every agency does it very  
25 differently. The-- we had a hearing a couple of

1  
2 years ago with NYPD and FDNY on this very issue, the  
3 issue of supportive services, medical and mental  
4 health, and the way that the Fire Department does it  
5 is that immediately like when there's a traumatic  
6 event, there's a group of folks that are like all up  
7 in your face at contact, right? And so that resource  
8 is immediately available to you, because we-- you  
9 know, we understand, right, like that we have a  
10 tendency of I guess not really taking the work that  
11 we're doing, right, the trauma and foresight as  
12 seriously as we should, right? We think that we can  
13 kind of, you know-- we'll get over it, right? Like,  
14 we'll pray on it and we'll, you know, but the need  
15 for mental health services to really help process  
16 what, you know, what we saw, what we felt, right?  
17 How do we move forward in a healthy way is really  
18 important, and I think that the FDNY for some reason  
19 does it the best out of all of the city agencies, but  
20 I think is a model that should be replicated, because  
21 truth be told, right, your staff is coming into  
22 contact with some really heavy-duty cases, and I've  
23 said many times before that I don't know that I  
24 would, you know, emotionally be able to do that work.  
25 I'm stressed out and drained just thinking about it,

1 right? It's a lot, and you know, I think it's a  
2 necessary investment.  
3

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you for  
5 that, Deputy Speaker, and we'll certainly look at the  
6 FDNY to see if there's something we can learn from  
7 it. We do it through the New York Society for  
8 Prevention to Cruelty to Children. They are the  
9 rapid deployment and we've seen it be very helpful  
10 for some staff. You and I have also talked about the  
11 kind of culture we're trying to build at ACS around  
12 psychological safety. The culture of blame very  
13 quickly without careful analysis and assessment is  
14 something we're working to undo. We know that that  
15 can make our practice-- it can affect our practice,  
16 can affect the way we treat families. So I take it  
17 as important too not only for the good of our staff,  
18 but to our mission that we are being really  
19 thoughtful in how we assess when something goes  
20 wrong, and learn from it and go deep, but making sure  
21 that our staff understand that we're not going to  
22 make quick blanket judgments. Most often, these are  
23 system challenges that we have to solve. So I really  
24 appreciate our staff, and we are trying to make sure  
25

1 that they understand that it's a new day in that  
2 regard.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, no I really  
5 appreciate that. Regarding new needs on childcare,  
6 the Executive Plan adds \$57 million in Fiscal Year 23  
7 as the result of the state market rate increase in  
8 for childcare providers. Approximately 4,000  
9 providers will benefit from this funding. What is the  
10 breakdown by borough and demographics? Do you have  
11 that information?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We can get you  
13 that breakdown. I don't have it with me today, but  
14 it is 4,000 providers as you mentioned, and we'll get  
15 you that breakdown.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And can you  
17 provide an update on what we can expect in Fiscal  
18 Year 2024 and how much funding may need to be added  
19 to cover the changes in the rates?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We're doing  
21 that assessment with OMB. So the cost here, much of  
22 it is CCBG. So the-- there's for certain vouchers,  
23 for the mandated population through HRA, for the  
24 child welfare population through ACS, there is a City  
25 tax levy cost and that is the cost that is being

2 added here. For the low-income vouchers, which we're  
3 really working to expand, it does not have the same  
4 cost, because they're more fully supported by CCBG.  
5 So we're doing that analysis. Lots of it will have  
6 to do with what kind of vouchers grow. So we don't  
7 see this skyrocketing, but at the same time we are  
8 looking to get more and more providers through the  
9 rate increase process. So we're doing that analysis  
10 with OMB.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Perfect, okay. And  
12 regarding the Executive Plan, as-- this is on foster  
13 care. The Executive Plan adds \$47 million in Fiscal  
14 Year 2023 as a result of the statewide settlement  
15 increase for foster parent stipend and adoption  
16 subsidies and increase maximum state aid. How many  
17 families or children would be benefiting from the  
18 statewide settlement, and what and when was the MSAR  
19 being increased?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, we-- it's  
21 about 7,000, a little less than 7,000 children in  
22 foster care, and about 11,000 between adoption and  
23 kinship guardianship rates will be-- have been  
24 impacted by this. So, it went into effect I believe  
25 last-- 2023, last July. The-- so this was a state

2 settlement of a lawsuit to increase the rates which  
3 was great. The bad part is that they didn't add any  
4 money into the block grant support it, so this is why  
5 we're putting-- I have to put additional funds into  
6 this.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. I have two more  
8 questions on capital. The Five-year Plan calls--  
9 totals \$476 million of which \$275 million is  
10 dedicated to the secure detention facilities. What  
11 is the cost benefit analysis that ACS undertook to  
12 establish this level of support for capital projects?

13 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, this is to  
14 make sure that we are expanding both capacity and  
15 programming room. You know, raise-- when Raise the  
16 Age happened and ACS began to serve 16 and 17-year-  
17 olds in secure detention, there was an initial  
18 investment to prepare those buildings, but they  
19 really need full renovation. So this is Horizon and  
20 Crossroads that we're talking about. So we're  
21 working with DDC to draw up those plans, make sure we  
22 go through all the processes to begin to build space  
23 on-site so that then we can create not only the  
24 additional programming, but some additional bed  
25 capacity as well.



2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: okay. So that-- I  
3 mean, I was going to ask you when do you expect it to  
4 be completed, but it sounds like you're very  
5 preliminary, you know, in conversations now.

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are. We're  
7 hopeful. We're pushing it as fast as we can, because  
8 it's very important for the young people there, but  
9 you know these processes.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And then  
11 finally, the Fiscal Year 2021 Preliminary Plan  
12 increased capital budget of \$7.9 million for the  
13 consolidation of four Brooklyn Division of Housing  
14 Protection Offices into one of 12 Metro Tech Centers.  
15 It seems that this is-- that this project is ongoing  
16 in Fiscal Year 2023. What is the current status of  
17 it, and did ACS purchase new properties or facilities  
18 for this project or utilize existing resources?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It is complete.  
20 So we're fully in Metro Tech. I don't know the  
21 answer if we-- I believe it was within existing  
22 resources. It was before my time, so I'll have to  
23 get you an answer to that question.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, perfect.  
25 Alright, thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
4 Cabán for questions?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Yes, thank you.  
6 I'd love to kind of pick up on a line of questioning  
7 from the Deputy Speaker, and thank you for your  
8 testimony and for taking questions, and also  
9 reference a little bit of your testimony. So,  
10 specifically, Promise NYC-- and again, I know that I  
11 have done it in the past, but just want to commend  
12 y'all on the work that you've done on that front.  
13 But in your testimony you pointed out, very  
14 accurately I might say, that access to childcare is  
15 essential for families, and then you continued by  
16 saying that this past year we've made tremendous  
17 progress, increasing the number of children receiving  
18 childcare assistance including for the first time  
19 ever for undocumented children in FY23 through the  
20 funding of Promise NYC. Can you go in a little bit  
21 more detail on why this constituted such a  
22 contribution to such tremendous progress, and sort of  
23 lay out some of the specific benefits of the program  
24 and outcomes?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure. Thank  
3 you, Council Member. So, Promise NYC was, as you  
4 mentioned, the first time ever that families with  
5 children who are undocumented had access to childcare  
6 support. We had to create a way in which we could  
7 access, have families access that support because  
8 federal rules don't allow government to pay directly  
9 to-- for subsidy in this area. So we worked with our  
10 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to identify  
11 criteria which we could do a procurement on and help-  
12 - and identify the right local CBO's. We identified  
13 four CBO's, La Comena [sp?], NYMIC [sp?], Chinese  
14 American Planning Council, and the Center for Family  
15 Life, and they began last-- at the end of last  
16 calendar year to enroll families in childcare using  
17 subsidy. We saw that there was great demand for the  
18 program, and using community-based organizations  
19 which is not a surprise-- families trusted them and  
20 we were able to turn to them and access childcare.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And I guess my  
22 follow-- my next question is a pretty simple one.  
23 The Executive Budget include zero dollars for Promise  
24 NYC, and so what impact would an allocation of zero  
25

2 dollars have on the program and the families that  
3 currently rely on it.

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, the  
5 families are-- have childcare subsidy through the end  
6 of June and it would mean the elimination of that  
7 support starting July 1<sup>st</sup>.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay. And last  
9 year, \$10 million dollars was sufficient for-- or  
10 this past Fiscal Year-- 600 families for six months  
11 of Promise NYC essentially. I know that the  
12 organizations that you mentioned, they had stop  
13 enrolling before the full period was over because  
14 they hit the monetary max, and that the need, the  
15 number of people were eligible far out-paced what the  
16 services that were able to be provided based on the  
17 budget provided, and given that we need 12 months  
18 funding this year and our recently-arrived asylum-  
19 seekers have grown the need for Promise NYC, would it  
20 be fair to say that we need at least \$20 million to  
21 keep this vital program operational?

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are in  
23 conversations with OMB about that and what it-- what  
24 the need is and any way in which we can help meet it.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And Chair, if I  
3 could take a few seconds to wrap up. You know, I--  
4 again, I have I been blown away in a good way on what  
5 we've been able to accomplish, what this agency was  
6 able to do in partnership with the organizations on  
7 providing this childcare. And you know, you had also  
8 said an answer to Deputy Speaker that we're talking  
9 about, you know, simply the fiscal realities, and we  
10 have to make difficult decisions, and with all due  
11 respect I think this is an easy decision. \$20  
12 million dollars accounts for one-fifth of one percent  
13 of our budget, and we know that getting parents  
14 childcare, getting children childcare means getting  
15 parents to work which means staving off all the risk  
16 that come with economic instability whether it's  
17 homelessness or a bunch of other things. We  
18 criminalize homelessness. We criminalize economic  
19 procarity. We criminalize immigration status, and so  
20 this is a tiny investment with just immense gains on  
21 the public health and safety front, and it's a matter  
22 of equity, racial equity, immigrant justice when we  
23 talk about providing that access that other children  
24 currently get access to, you know, our-- and I know  
25 that this is not your decision, but our budget is a

2 moral document has been said a million times over,  
3 and we could give one-fifth of one percent of our  
4 budget to this incredible program that you have just  
5 touted about with-- and you're right, or we could  
6 keep giving billions of dollars to policing and  
7 incarceration. I just think it's a no-brainer, but I  
8 thank you for continuing to advocate for its  
9 continuation and expansion.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
11 Brewer?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very  
13 much, and obviously I have some questions about  
14 Family Court. Thank you for coming to the hearing  
15 about that. I know you talked about mental health and  
16 that you didn't need to spend more, because you were  
17 sort of putting the mental health programs in the  
18 court to whatever was needed, but it's a \$4.3 million  
19 dollar cut as I understand to mental health and  
20 substance abuse in the coming budget. So I'm wanting  
21 to know how will that impact the work of your  
22 attorneys? How will it impact just the staffing that  
23 oversees these services? Obviously I spent quite a  
24 bit of time in Family Court in all five boroughs  
25 recently and in the Children's Center. So I am

2 concerned about this because this was very apparent  
3 to me that mental health and substance abuse are  
4 certainly issues that have to be addressed. So how  
5 do you-- how you going to address that?

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you,  
7 Council Member. Without a doubt, we need support for  
8 mental health and substance abuse. This is the two  
9 distinct programs. One is the mental health  
10 evaluations that were happening in Family Court. In  
11 that program there's been under-utilization, and  
12 we're just bringing it down to the spending, so we  
13 offer that service. It has not been used. Our  
14 hypothesis around that is that families would like to  
15 get access to mental health evaluations outside of  
16 the court system, outside of what they perceive as  
17 ACS and many of them are getting support from their  
18 attorneys, the institutional providers to access  
19 that. It is-- will continue to be a program. If it  
20 turns out that more is needed in that regard, we can  
21 always revisit that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But why not take  
23 the \$4.3 and allocate it to what is needed which are  
24 mental health services and substance abuse instead of  
25 cutting?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We--

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]

4 Because this-- there's no question that they're  
5 needed, maybe not the evaluation, but as you said,  
6 the real programs?

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, through our  
8 Prevention Services we can offer some of that on the  
9 family counseling end, and we have-- we've got  
10 clinical consultants in our Child Protective offices  
11 who help to access. So they are experts in substance  
12 abuse, experts in mental health counseling, and so  
13 we-- they work with our providers-- excuse me, with  
14 our specialists to access services. On the substance  
15 use side, that was a partnership with H+H that with  
16 one site and one location at Cumberland, that too was  
17 not utilized, and so those services are key, but we  
18 wanted to make sure it's ac-- accessible citywide and  
19 those consultant contracts, which are with Jewish  
20 Board and with the Child Center of New York, are  
21 helping us access those services.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I mean, I  
23 think you know, and you will be getting more letters  
24 from us, Oversight and Investigation, to ask about  
25 the issue of more services, because the lawyers and



2 the judges say over and over again they just don't  
3 have enough places to send the individuals who need  
4 these services. They're not there. And I would  
5 assume that that would be something of concern to  
6 you, right?

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Indeed.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. The  
9 Children's Center, so I know that there is obviously  
10 a need for capital, so I want to hear about that.  
11 But also, your housing there, you're supposed to have  
12 24-48 hours, much longer durations. Can you tell me  
13 about the cost of staffing there, what other kind of  
14 staffing needs, program and budget, and what's going  
15 on with the capital need?

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure. And  
17 First Deputy Council Member Saunders, the Children's  
18 Center reports directly to her, and she'd one an  
19 amazing job. So I'll say a few words and then ask  
20 her to add to that. So the cost of the Children's  
21 Center on an annual basis is a little over \$30  
22 million dollars. We have been able to reduce the  
23 population at the Children's Center year over year  
24 about 15 percent by increasing placements, by  
25 reducing the number of children coming there in the

2 first place because we're accessing kinship before  
3 children are coming to the Children's Center. It  
4 still fluctuates anywhere between 50 and 80 young  
5 people at any given time. We have on-site nursing,  
6 on-site mental health services, on-site programming.  
7 It is not the place we want children to be, so we are  
8 constantly working to reduce that, and I've seen some  
9 movement in that regard, and I'll ask First Deputy  
10 Commissioner of Safety to say a few more words.

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS:

12 Sure. Thank you so much for always keeping the  
13 Children's Center on your radar, really appreciate  
14 your support--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] It  
16 is very much on my radar, because my judge friends  
17 think it's not going well. I'm just letting you  
18 know.

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS:

20 Well, I'm happy that you're keeping it on your radar,  
21 because we need all the support that we can get from  
22 all of our stakeholders. So, you asked the question  
23 about capital. Did you want to hear about what that  
24 capital will cover?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Sure, yes. Sure,  
3 go ahead.

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS:

5 Okay. So it will cover infrastructure upgrades such  
6 as HVAC and the expansion to electrical wattage, but  
7 it will also cover enhancements to our waiting area,  
8 to our visitation space, to our nursery. Also, we  
9 will be building an additional entrance for young  
10 people to enter. Really focused on trying to make  
11 sure that the space is trauma-informed and supportive  
12 to young people as they enter and exit the Children's  
13 Center.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. That's  
15 around \$15 million I think is what you might be  
16 budgeting for. All I'm saying is obviously there are  
17 still challenges in terms of the young people being  
18 there for a longer period of time. I also want to  
19 mention that there is this Family Court Working  
20 Committee. Commissioner, I think you mentioned that  
21 you are not part of it. We've been in touch with  
22 them. Are you part of it, the Williams Commission?  
23 There is a Family Court Working Committee.

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I am not  
25 personally. I'd be happy to participate in any way.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Because it  
3 seems to be it does exist. And then finally, I want  
4 to thank Stephanie because everybody's fabulous, but  
5 she's really fabulous. Thank you very much.

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you. She  
7 sure is.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
9 Williams?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. I  
11 have a question about Family Court services. So, I  
12 guess following up on Council Member Brewer's point  
13 about what services related to and how it'll be  
14 impacted, the \$4.3 billion, yeah.

15 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, those  
16 services, the \$4.3 million was dedicated to mostly  
17 mental health evaluations via the Family Court.  
18 They've been underutilized for some time. You know,  
19 we're obviously bringing fewer families to Family  
20 Court, down about 47-- 40 percent since 2019, but in  
21 addition, families have not been accessing it,  
22 electing to access those services in other ways. So  
23 this is just bringing it down to current spending  
24 levels, and we'll continue to assess.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, so the  
3 PEG just doesn't affect staffing that oversees the  
4 services?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It does not.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, cool.  
7 The next question I have is around OCFS hearings and  
8 clearing the names of parents in the State Central  
9 Registry. Do you know how many parents are on the  
10 registry?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I don't. So  
12 the-- you would-- parents would be on the registry if  
13 there was an indication of abuse or maltreatment.  
14 Obviously, we are working hard to expand CARES  
15 because this has been a problem for many families.  
16 And so I can get those numbers for you. I'm sure  
17 they're in the tens of thousands.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. And is  
19 ACS always represented by an attorney at OCFS  
20 hearings?

21 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are  
22 represented by our Office of General Counsel, and-- I  
23 assume you're referring to Fair Hearings?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah. So, also  
25 another question is how many Fair Hearings was ACS

2 assigned to in the past year, and how many hearings  
3 did ACS settle, which is present on evidence on?

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Let me see if  
5 we can get those numbers for you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: The question I  
7 have-- the last question I have is in regards to  
8 Family Enrichment Centers. I know you've spoken about  
9 it in previous hearings, but if you could just give  
10 more details on the different programs that are  
11 immediately available at the FECs and how parents and  
12 community members will be outreached to and engaged,  
13 and how much funding will go towards outreach?

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, thank you  
15 for that. So we are in the process of expanding from  
16 three to 30. So there are nine that are actively--  
17 some have just opened. Some are opening. They'll be  
18 a series of grand openings over the course of the  
19 next weeks and months. Before the FEC staff even find  
20 a site, they are reaching out to community members.  
21 They're reaching out to local leaders to identify  
22 folks who want to get very involved with the  
23 development of the Family Enrichment Center. So  
24 they're identifying what programming, which we call  
25 Offerings, will happen there. They're identifying

1 with the name of the site will be, how it will focus,  
2 what partnerships in the community it will hold. At  
3 all of the Family Enrichment Centers there's  
4 something called Parent Café's which just are kind of  
5 like parent-- like a book club for parents where  
6 people are focused on really creating community. One  
7 of the things that I think the Family Enrichment  
8 Centers does best is combat social isolation, which  
9 we know is something that can be harmful to families.  
10 So it's a real collaborative effort between the  
11 community and each FEC. Many of them end up focusing  
12 on some advocacy. Many of them have particular  
13 provider relationships that-- so their services. Many  
14 are working with food pantries around basic needs and  
15 other-- meeting other basic needs.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And do they  
18 have specific funding for outreach?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, in the  
20 initial year we put additional money, I think it's  
21 \$100,000 for them to focus on outreaching. So they  
22 get an additional \$100,000 during that first year to  
23 do that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: That's for each  
25 center or all of the centers?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Each center. It  
3 also includes sort of start-up costs, anything that  
4 relates, but they spend a lot of that on the  
5 outreach.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Chair, I have  
7 one more question. It's about the field offices.  
8 And I remember asking you a question about this  
9 before, but do you have any other amendments to  
10 previous comments or thoughts on the Agency's goals  
11 in making changes to the field office? We noted that  
12 there's \$1.4 million dollars for field offices  
13 removed from the Executive Capital Plan. Why is  
14 there a decline, and do you think that community  
15 members would have difficulty reaching ACS with a  
16 smaller footprint?

17 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I believe  
18 that's just a change in the assessment of the cost.  
19 We are absolutely focused on this. we're  
20 particularly focused on this in the Bronx, moving our  
21 Mars Park Avenue site to Barto [sic] and trying to  
22 make that a more beautiful site. We're also looking  
23 at the other part of Brooklyn or Brooklyn East to  
24 identify consolidation opportunities and  
25 beautification opportunities for those sites.



2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, and  
3 I hope you look at the Queens field office.

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, Archer  
5 Avenue is also--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
7 My mom worked there and it looks exactly the same as  
8 it did 30 years ago. It is not a pretty building.  
9 So hopefully--

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [interposing] We  
11 are also focused on Archer Avenue. It's a little bit  
12 behind--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
14 Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: the other two,  
16 but it absolutely a focus.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And I know EDC  
18 has a project there as well, but okay, thank you so  
19 much.

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you  
21 Council Member.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
23 Stevens?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good afternoon,  
25 Commissioner. I just have a couple of questions.

2 The PEGs program in the Executive Budget includes a  
3 \$7.2 million dollar baseline reduction in funding for  
4 special childcare vouchers beginning Fiscal 2024.  
5 ACS plans to shift the eligible FCCF vouchers to the  
6 childcare block. Can you explain why the baseline  
7 funding was cut? And I'm just going to ask another  
8 question, too. In terms of eligibility, what is the  
9 difference between the vouchers funded by special  
10 childcare vouchers and childcare block vouchers?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure. Thanks,  
12 Council Member Stevens. So, this program was created  
13 in a time where we had a very long wait list where  
14 there wasn't access to childcare vouchers, and so the  
15 City put in additional resources. That has changed.  
16 We've cleared the waitlist of 35,000 children and now  
17 are open citywide for applications through a CCBG.  
18 So we are going-- the eligibility criteria is the  
19 same between FCCF and CCBG, and so we'll begin  
20 working with families to help transfer from FCCF to  
21 CCBG. So this is a-- will be a CTL savings, and  
22 we'll work to get families to continue with  
23 childcare.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: What percentage  
3 of FCCF vouchers recipients would be ineligible for a  
4 CCBG?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We're hopeful--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing] And  
7 what would you do to ensure that those benefits will  
8 continue in the future if all baseline funding is  
9 eliminated?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So there are  
11 about 770 children who are enrolled through FCCF.  
12 We're going to be reaching out to them very soon, as  
13 of this week, to help them to begin to make that  
14 transition. Since the criteria is the same, we're  
15 hopeful that a large proportion of the children can  
16 remain enrolled. So, any--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing] So  
18 what happens to the small proportion that you're  
19 saying that might not be eligible? So what does that  
20 look like?

21 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Well, we'd have  
22 to look at that. The eligibility is the same. I  
23 don't think there's going to be a large proportion of  
24 that, but we'd be happy to give the Council ongoing  
25 updates and have meetings as we reach out to families

2 and see if there's something that we don't  
3 anticipate.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay. What  
5 other changes to expand the childcare is ACS  
6 advocating for with the state and federal government?  
7 How much is the budget requested, if any? And then  
8 one more question. In the Council's budget response,  
9 the Council called on the Administration to add \$9.2  
10 million for SCCF vouchers administered by ACS. Why  
11 is the funding not being included in the Executive  
12 Budget?

13 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, on the  
14 SCCF, that's the same, just trying to move from CTL  
15 to federal dollars as to maximize the federal dollar.  
16 On the point of the state, we are advocating for them  
17 to de-link the hours that are authorized for  
18 childcare from work hours. Parents do a lot of other  
19 things than work that they need childcare for, and we  
20 think that has been hampering families' flexibility.  
21 We also in the out-years, which is very important, we  
22 know the state's plans for the next few years, but as  
23 we rapidly expand the number of children who are  
24 enrolled with vouchers, when we hit a cliff a couple  
25 years out, we really want the state to continue to

2 make investments that they've made for the next  
3 couple of years. So funding needs get particularly  
4 acute as we go out, so we're advocating the state to  
5 continue to make investments in childcare.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And just the  
7 last question I had asked around the-- because I know  
8 you guys are saying SCCF vouchers are the same as  
9 child block, but the-- so, but it's no additional  
10 money being added to that. So can you talk a little  
11 bit about, like, what funding might needed as we are  
12 shifting or I guess collaborating the two programs.

13 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, we have--  
14 we're still waiting for the state allocation for this  
15 year, but we're confident from conversations that  
16 we've had from them. We have room to grow on the  
17 low-income side from where we are today around 18,000  
18 which is up from 7,000 to over 40. So we have  
19 significant room to grow in the budget. we'll have to  
20 see exactly what the allocation is that's provided to  
21 us, but we're confident for this year we can just  
22 continue to enroll as fast as we can families and  
23 children in the low-income vouchers, and we'll have  
24 the resources to do it.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
4 Louis?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair.

6 Thank you, Commissioner, for being here today.

7 Deputy Speaker Ayala asked some of my questions as

8 well as Council Member Brewer, because I did have

9 questions about Close to Home and mental health. But

10 I did want to quickly just share, and then I'll ask

11 you my question. Hopefully you all could think about

12 this a little bit differently. Under-utilization

13 shouldn't automatically mean a cut. You should think

14 about recalibrating or pivoting to another

15 alternative as opposed to cutting, because if you

16 think that you're going to have another conversation

17 later, it's going to get more challenging and

18 complicated to put it back in the budget. So I just

19 wanted to quickly just share that. So, as Co-chair

20 of the Women's Caucus, and we have a large majority

21 of women that lead the Council right now, we're

22 calling for equitable pregnancy outcomes. And I know

23 that the Deputy Speaker spoke about this earlier.

24 The Nurse to Family Partnership-- while ACS is just a

25 pass-through for this particular initiative, I wanted

2 to know if there was any way you could provide a  
3 report on the impact and the outcomes of families  
4 served so that we can know if \$1.8 suffices what's  
5 needed for FY24.

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you,  
7 Council Member. It's a great program. I think all of  
8 the home visiting programs are so important. First,  
9 let me assure you that we are always looking at ways  
10 to reinvest if there's underutilization into other  
11 programming. We've done that in a number of areas,  
12 and so that's a point well-taken. We can work with  
13 our colleagues in the Department of Health to look at  
14 that. They administer those programs, so we can see  
15 what data we can collect. We are always looking at  
16 ways in which-- if we can, as I talking about  
17 earlier, reduce the number of unnecessary  
18 investigations, it's another place we'd like to think  
19 about. How do you use some of that dollar to  
20 reinvest in not only our workforce, but in additional  
21 services?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: We would  
23 appreciate that report.

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Okay. I'll see  
25 what we can do them.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you. Thank  
3 you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
5 Restler?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. Thank  
7 you so much Chair Brannan and Chair Ayala. I'm  
8 looking for my glasses. I found them. Now I can see  
9 you. Commissioner, nice to see you, and First Deputy  
10 Commissioner Saunders from your days at DOC I've  
11 always had a lot of admiration for you, so it's good  
12 to see you. And I want to thank the whole ACS team  
13 for your hard work. You guys have a tough job,  
14 especially Stephanie. It's good to see you. I don't  
15 see Jill or Toba [sic]. I don't know if they're  
16 hiding somewhere, but they're my-- they're my  
17 ultimate go-to's. I am going to ask about a topic  
18 that Stephanie probably predicted which are vouchers,  
19 building on the questions that my good friend Council  
20 Member Stevens asked. So, I just wanted to affirm,  
21 Commissioner, that you said that the waiting list is  
22 down to zero and has remained at zero.

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Correct.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, that's a  
25 great accomplishment.



2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I mean, I would  
4 think it would be awkward if I gave you a round of  
5 applause, but I'm-- verbally.

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: You could give  
7 it to Liz and her staff.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: They deserve it.  
9 They really do. So, that's great. And just want to  
10 affirm that as a result of the additional state  
11 funding we have through CCBG, we've taken down \$7.2  
12 million dollars in CTL funding for the SCCF funded  
13 city vouchers. Does that mean that there's no longer  
14 a city contribution to these vouchers, we're relying  
15 entirely on state and federal funds?

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: There's a city  
17 contribution for-- it depends sort of which door  
18 families enter. So if they're coming through the  
19 mandated-- which what we call the mandated-- if  
20 they're receiving public assistance and getting  
21 childcare, because they're working. That population  
22 has come down for obvious reason because of the  
23 pandemic because of work rules being suspended. If  
24 that population increases there's a 25 percent city  
25 tax levy contribution in that. There's not any in

2 the low-income vouchers. The child welfare  
3 population which we have focused on trying to get  
4 families who are in a Child Protective investigation  
5 or prevention, preventive childcare over years, we've  
6 used a match with the state prevention to be the  
7 offset for that cost. We're also working on that  
8 population for families who have been on that for  
9 some time to move them to CCBG. So, this is an  
10 overall strategy to maximize federal dollars.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: As it total the  
12 right and responsible thing, and I'm pleased that  
13 you're doing it. And to great effect we've gotten  
14 the waiting list down to zero, but I think I would be  
15 remiss not to worry about the future day where those  
16 federal funds run out, and I want to ask, because  
17 this Administration committed to, you know, stepping  
18 up if the feds-- when the federal spigot runs dry to  
19 ensure that we can keep this waiting list down to  
20 zero and continue to provide these essential  
21 vouchers.

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: This  
23 Administration has been clear for us to continue to  
24 enroll families in vouchers and low-income vouchers  
25 especially, that that's an important part of the

2 Mayor's Childcare Blueprint. We're going to need  
3 federal and state support to continue at those rates,  
4 but we have clear direction for the next 18 months to  
5 two years to continue to do that. I think there are  
6 going to be very important conversations over those  
7 years about the vision and future of childcare.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. And just  
9 to affirm, because I know my time has run out--  
10 working parents who are not on public assistance can  
11 continue to apply and without a waiting list, they  
12 should have an opportunity to access the vouchers  
13 that are available.

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's right,  
15 and thank you for that question, Council Member. So,  
16 the-- it's important for working families to know  
17 that the current standard is now 300 percent of the  
18 federal poverty level.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right. Because  
20 of the-- in the state budget, they went to 85 percent  
21 of SMI, so we're going from -- we already went from  
22 about 55,000 to 85,000 for a family of four. Now I  
23 believe it's about 95,000 for a family of four. So  
24 there's a lot of families out there that need to know  
25

2 that childcare is available to them, including many  
3 of our hardworking city staff.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, it's a real  
5 accomplishment. We are thrilled that so many  
6 vouchers are going to families in need in our  
7 community, and I hope communities across the City  
8 take advantage as well. Thank you for your work on  
9 this, really appreciate it.

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thanks, Council  
11 Member.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, thank  
14 you so much. Thank you and your team for being here.

15 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: thank you.  
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we'll take a  
18 five-minute break and then we're going to hear from  
19 the Department of Veterans Services.

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you,  
21 Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

24 [break]

25 [gavel]

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, good  
3 afternoon and welcome to the final Executive Budget  
4 hearing of the day. We'll be focused on the  
5 Department of Veterans Services. I am still Justin  
6 Brannan. I am the Chair of the Committee on Finance,  
7 and for this hearing I'm joined by my colleague,  
8 Council Member Robert Holden, who Chairs the  
9 Committee on Veterans. We've been joined by Council  
10 Members Paladino, Ariola, Kagan, and Richardson  
11 Jordan. And I want to thank, obviously, Commissioner  
12 James Hendon and his team, of course former  
13 Councilman Vallone for being here. Thank you all for  
14 joining us today to answer our questions. So DVS's  
15 projected FY24 budget of \$5 million dollars  
16 represented less than half of one percent of the  
17 Administration's proposed FY24 budget in the  
18 Executive Plan. This represents a decrease of  
19 \$122,000 or 2.4 percent from the \$5.1 million dollars  
20 budgeted in the Administration's FY24 Prelim plan.  
21 The decrease comes from changes due to collective  
22 bargaining in the citywide PEG initiative. The  
23 Department of Veterans Services projected budget  
24 reflects a decrease in headcount of four positions.  
25 My question today will primarily focus on the PEGs

2 for the Agency, headcount vacancies, and staffing,  
3 and of course housing for our veterans. I'll now  
4 turn to my co-chair for this hearing, Council Member  
5 Holden, Chair of the Veterans Committee, for his  
6 opening statement.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair.  
8 Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the City  
9 Council Committee on Veterans Fiscal 2024 Executive  
10 Budget hearing. My name is Robert Holden. I am Chair  
11 of the Committee on Veterans. Today, we will hear  
12 from DVS Commissioner James Hendon, Assistant  
13 Commissioner of Community Affairs Jason Loughran, and  
14 Deputy Commissioner of External Affairs, Paul  
15 Vallone. Department of Veterans Services, or DVS,  
16 Fiscal 2024 Executive Budget totals \$5 million  
17 including \$3.5 million in personal services funding  
18 to support 37 budgeted fulltime positions. This is  
19 \$1.1 million dollars, or 18 percent less than the  
20 budget adopted last year. DVS is a vital institution  
21 with a mission to ensure that the concerns of New  
22 York City's veterans are heard and addressed. Given  
23 that DVS does not have a budget to meet its mission  
24 fully, it is frustrating and disappointing to see DVS  
25 be reduced and not exempt from PEG reductions. With

2 this in mind, we hope to gain a clearer understanding  
3 of DVS's efforts to mitigate the impact of these  
4 reductions, learn how DVS is collaborating with city  
5 agencies and what actions the Department is taking to  
6 confront the issues facing our veterans in New York.  
7 I have advocating for an increase in funding for DVS.  
8 Since my office has become a Veterans Resource  
9 Center, I have seen firsthand the positive impact DVS  
10 case managers can have on the veteran community. I  
11 also believe veterans services organizations should  
12 receive funding through member-designated  
13 initiatives. Our veteran's service organizations  
14 play a vital role in the social safety net that helps  
15 our former service members in difficult situations.  
16 There's a lot-- there's a lot of services that our  
17 veterans service organizations do, but one, again, is  
18 act as mentors. While veterans issues may make  
19 headlines in a few weeks because of Memorial Day and  
20 ten again in the fall on Veterans Day, the good  
21 people at VSO's and DVS are working every day to  
22 improve the lives of our former service members. We  
23 must work together to make New York City more  
24 hospitable for the veteran community. And I want to  
25 thank Financial Analyst Ross Goldstein, Assistant

2 Director Crilhien Francisco, Policy Analyst  
3 Anastassia Zimina, Committee Counsel David Romero and  
4 my staff for putting together today's hearing. I  
5 also would like to acknowledge some of the members of  
6 the Committee who are present today, Council Member  
7 Jordan, Council Member Paladino, Council Member  
8 Ariola, Council Member-- who else-- Kagan is here,  
9 Council Member Carr, Council Member Velázquez,  
10 Council Member Farías. Did I get everybody? Okay,  
11 with that, I would like to now ask the Community  
12 Counsel to administer the oath for testifying-- the  
13 representatives that are testifying today.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon, can  
15 you raise your right hands, please? Do you affirm  
16 that your testimony will be truthful to the best of  
17 your knowledge, information, and belief, and you will  
18 honestly and faithfully answer Council Member  
19 questions? James Hendon?

20 COMMISSIONER HENDON: I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Glenda Garcia?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GARCIA: I do.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Paul Vallone?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: I do.  
25



2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may  
3 begin.

4 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Good morning  
5 Chairman Holden, Members of the Committee, and  
6 Advocates, and Chairman Brannan. Thank you providing  
7 the Department of Veterans Services with the  
8 opportunity to speak with you about our mission,  
9 services, and programs for Fiscal Year 2024. My names  
10 is James Hendon. I'm proud and honored to serve as  
11 Commissioner of the New York City Department of  
12 Veteran Services. I'm joined by my colleague Paul  
13 Vallone, Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs,  
14 and Glenda Garcia, Deputy Commissioner for  
15 Operations. I'm excited to speak with you today and  
16 testify regarding our budget and our current efforts  
17 which include benefits navigation, support, VA  
18 disability claims, assistance, housing services,  
19 community outreach, employment, and entrepreneurship.  
20 Following my testimony we welcome any questions that  
21 the committee may have. With each fiscal year there  
22 is a new opportunity to look back on our previous  
23 accomplishments, both since the inception of our  
24 agency and since I've become Commissioner. The  
25 decisions made during these budget seasons ensure

1 that we continue to deliver the support and services  
2 that our nearly 200,000 veterans throughout the five  
3 boroughs value and depend on. Veterans are valued  
4 members of our community. Their service and  
5 sacrifice to our nation will not be forgotten, and it  
6 is now our turn to lend a helping hand. To quote  
7 President Abraham Lincoln's second Inaugural Address  
8 and the Veterans Affairs credo, "To care for him who  
9 shall have borne the battle." Our agency has served  
10 as a national model for how cities can offer  
11 comprehensive and holistic services to veterans, I'm  
12 confident that the upcoming budget discussion will  
13 produce a sound fiscal plan that will enable DVS and  
14 the City of New York to continue to provide our  
15 veterans with the necessary services they require.  
16 Since last year's budget hearing, much has changed  
17 throughout the City. The pandemic has subsided to  
18 near pre-pandemic conditions and we have a few new  
19 members on the Veterans Committee. With the relaxing  
20 of COVID restrictions, DVS has been working hard  
21 getting on the streets and conducting outreach to our  
22 City's veterans and continuing to provide the  
23 critical services our constituents need. For FY23,  
24 \$5.7 million was allocated to our agency staffing and  
25

2 programmatic budget function. We're currently  
3 slotted to be allocated \$5 million for FY24, \$3.4  
4 million of which will cover personnel services, \$1.6  
5 million of which will cover other than personnel  
6 services. \$4.7 million of the DVS budget comes from  
7 City tax levied funding, the remainder being provided  
8 by the State of New York in the amount of \$327,442.  
9 DVS' current authorized strengthen for headcount is  
10 35, not accounting for two employees on long-term  
11 protected leave for a total headcount of 37.  
12 Currently, DVS is looking to fill two vacancies.  
13 Despite the changes happening around us, DVS stands  
14 committed to continuing improving our successful  
15 programs and services while continuing to produce  
16 effective and positive outcomes for our city's  
17 veterans. New York City is home to approximately  
18 200,000. Most of our City's veteran population  
19 resides in Queens and Brooklyn at 27.9 and 25.7  
20 percent respectively. Manhattan accounts for 18.3  
21 percent of the population. Bronx accounts for 17.9  
22 percent, and Staten Island stands at 10.2 percent.  
23 Within these numbers you will find mostly an aging  
24 population. 71 percent of community falls within the  
25 55 and over age bracket. Veterans are more likely to

1  
2 vote, volunteer, and are more civically engaged in  
3 their communities compared to their civilian  
4 counterparts. They are one of our city's greatest  
5 assets and we should continue to improve, grow, and  
6 provide services to them and their families. Our  
7 boots on the ground approach to serving New York  
8 City's veterans is spearheaded by our veteran peer  
9 coordinators and community service staff members.  
10 These individuals engage veterans, community partners  
11 and other agencies to work towards ending veteran  
12 homelessness, providing veterans access to benefits  
13 and crucial resources, and helping them achieve their  
14 entrepreneurial and career goals. In the first four  
15 months of Fiscal Year 2023, 102 veterans and families  
16 received homelessness prevention and aftercare [sic]  
17 assistance from our team. Furthermore, in the first  
18 four months of FY23, DVS secured housing for 61  
19 homeless veterans through our Veteran Peer  
20 Coordinator Program. Compared to the same period  
21 during FY22, these numbers reflect an increase of  
22 approximately 190 percent. We predict that this  
23 increase is a result of our return to normal services  
24 post-pandemic, and we expect these numbers to remain  
25 fairly consistent in the years ahead. Housing

1  
2 homeless veterans is one of the foundational pillars  
3 of this agency. DVS provides a hands-on approach to  
4 better identify and redress the solutions that  
5 homeless veterans find themselves in. Of course,  
6 addressing the housing issue alone does not fix the  
7 situation as a whole. There are many reasons our  
8 veterans may find themselves homeless. Our goal is  
9 to not only find them housing, but to ensure they  
10 have long term sustainability. Our most recent data  
11 shows that in 2022, a total of 482 veterans were  
12 homeless in New York City. Of them, 474 were  
13 sheltered and eight were unsheltered. Compared to  
14 our data from 2019, this represents a decrease in  
15 homeless veterans by a total of 202 homeless vets  
16 recognized by our agency's outreach efforts. DVS  
17 from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 to the present day has  
18 facilitated the housing of 102 veterans, representing  
19 an increase of nearly 100 percent from FY22. Thanks  
20 to our increased focus on communications and  
21 outreach, DVS has been able to engage and support 970  
22 veterans and veteran family members out of a total  
23 1,102 assistant requests made through our Vet Connect  
24 NYC program last Fiscal Year. These numbers  
25 represent increases of 156 percent and 183 percent

1  
2 respectively compared to the same time period during  
3 FY22. DVS contracts with Job Path to offer Vet  
4 Connect Pro, a digital employment tool to the New  
5 York City veteran community. This tool allows  
6 veterans to translate their military skills into  
7 civilian job specs while also providing a dashboard  
8 that supports resume building and access to  
9 transition services. In the first three months of  
10 FY23, 5,938 jobs have been posted to Vet Connect Pro,  
11 and during that timeframe, 122 individuals have  
12 leveraged the website yielding 58 job connections  
13 made. Currently, DVS contracts with two legal  
14 services providers through the Discharge Upgrade  
15 Assistance Legal Services program known as DUALS to  
16 help veterans in need of legal representation. The  
17 program provides grants to the New York Legal  
18 Assistance Group and Veteran Advocacy Project. Both  
19 services support discharge upgrade legal services to  
20 our community's veterans. To-date, DVS has screened  
21 284 cases for legal representation using our DUALS  
22 program. Identifying, promoting and assisting  
23 veteran-owned businesses is a priority in stimulating  
24 entrepreneurship throughout our community. We fulfil  
25 this goal through two key programs, Vet Biz Map and

1 the Veterans Business Leadership Association. Vet  
2 Biz Map is our interactive map that geographically  
3 showcases our city's veteran-owned businesses and was  
4 purchased in FY21 through NYC Help Desk, a MWBE  
5 vendor. In Fy23 there were approximately 303 veteran-  
6 owned businesses on the map, and as of May of 2023,  
7 106 new businesses have been added, amounting to a  
8 total of 409 establishments. DVS also initiated the  
9 Veteran Business Leadership Association, an  
10 initiative that host workshops and roundtable  
11 discussions to promote business development  
12 opportunities, access to capital financing options,  
13 supply chain diversity programs, and networking  
14 events. There are currently three upcoming events  
15 scheduled for the VPBLA. A summit to help a service  
16 disabled veteran-owned businesses and MWBE vendor's  
17 contract with JFK Airport, gathering to support  
18 veteran street vendors, and an event to help veteran  
19 and military spouses pursue franchise opportunities.  
20 In conclusion, the programs and services I've  
21 mentioned today are part of our Agency's core  
22 offerings, and will remain budget priorities for  
23 FY24. In closing, I'd like to thank the New York  
24 City veteran community for trusting us to serve you.  
25

2 While there's always more work to be done, we want  
3 each of you to know that we are here and that we  
4 care. It is an honor and privilege to serve all of  
5 you, and I thank you for allowing me to testify  
6 before you today. I'm pleased to address any  
7 questions you may have. And last thing I want to  
8 say, I want to give a special acknowledgement to our  
9 military spouses. Military Spouse Appreciation Day  
10 is this coming Friday. It's always the Friday before  
11 Mother's Day. So I want to just say Happy Military  
12 Spouse Appreciation Day to all our military and  
13 veteran spouses.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,  
15 Commissioner. I'm going to jump right into it, talk  
16 about PEGs. In addition to the PEGs in the November  
17 Plan and the Preliminary Plan, the Executive Plan  
18 includes one PEG for DVS and one in the out-years,  
19 totaling \$193,000. While it's not a large amount,  
20 given the size of the Agency, it would seem like  
21 there will not be much that could be reduced at DVS  
22 because it's so efficiently run. Can you walk us  
23 through how you arrived at that PEG and what the  
24 impact of these reductions would be, especially on  
25 outreach?



2 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Absolutely. So,  
3 Mr. Chair, just to go-- I'll start top line and then  
4 we'll go into it piece by piece. \$25,000 of the  
5 \$193,000 is tied to our Vet Connect NYC contract. As  
6 far as the future amount to be paid for that we  
7 estimate that's \$25,000, Vet Connect NYC. \$80,000 is  
8 money that was previously paid to consultants which  
9 will no longer be paid, so \$80,000 consultants.  
10 \$53,200 accounts for sponsorships, one-time events.  
11 So \$53,200 for sponsorships, one-time events.  
12 \$15,000 information technology, so IT is \$15,000.  
13 And then \$19,800 was media marketing, specifically an  
14 iHeartRadio Christmas marketing campaign that we ran  
15 this past holiday season. So once again, it's  
16 \$25,000 Vet Connect NYC, \$80,000 consultants, \$53,200  
17 sponsorships, \$15,000 IT, \$19,000 Christmas marketing  
18 campaign. For the Vet Connect NYC contract, that  
19 contract is up to turn over as far as a new contract  
20 period will start this October. Through doing a  
21 market assessment, we've determined that we can still  
22 meet mission, if not exceed what we've done  
23 previously with it at a lower price point, just given  
24 what technology is. So we felt that we were able to  
25 account for that as far as \$25,000 reduction. As far

1 as consultants, a lot of work we do in our agency is  
2 one plus one equals three. So, it's direct services,  
3 referrals, and synergies. The consultants supported  
4 synergy types of work. We've been awarded with two  
5 Americore members who will work with us in this  
6 upcoming Fiscal Year, working with NYC service to  
7 help us continue to do that, but not need to use  
8 money for consultants. So that's where the  
9 consultant money was-- we could pull that way. As  
10 far as the \$53,200 in sponsorships, sponsorships are  
11 things like a-- you know, a Community Board in  
12 Brooklyn, CB3816 had a Veterans Appreciation Parade.  
13 We helped with the sponsorship for that. You had a  
14 group, Black Veterans for Social Justice had a gala.  
15 We helped as far as an ad journal for that. Also,  
16 Queens County Veterans of Foreign Wars did something.  
17 We did an ad journal for that. So, that's-- when you  
18 think about sponsorships, it's the kind of things you  
19 do to make sure your community can see you and feel  
20 you. our off siting [sic] that is we're receiving  
21 separate from all of this, \$400,000 from the state  
22 through a veteran suicide prevention or mental  
23 health-- mental wellness program called the Joseph P.  
24 Dwyer Program to end veteran suicide. And so for us,  
25

1 we're running an RFP process of our own to get that  
2 money out to the community. so as opposed to this  
3 being things that are sponsorship for us, the City  
4 tax payer levy, we're going to leverage the Dwyer  
5 money to be able to push things out so community can  
6 still-- the same things you're going through right  
7 now with what you confer with nonprofits and reach  
8 out, etcetera. We want to do something similar,  
9 echoing it with the states capital. And I want to  
10 add, we want to get to say-- we vetted and chosen  
11 these organizations to receive, let's see if our  
12 philanthropic friends can add money to it. So to  
13 take what would have been \$400,000, make it much more  
14 as far as its impact. With the \$15,000 in IT, that's  
15 tied to-- we hired new staffers earlier this year,  
16 and that was all associated costs with the new folks  
17 we brought on. So we anticipate that was a one-time  
18 cost, not something that we'll be repeating, because  
19 we don't have new folks right now. And then as far  
20 as the media campaign with iHeartRadio, it was  
21 \$19,800. The value of that campaign was more than  
22 \$150,000. So they really gave us a very good deal  
23 there to help push messages out on 106.7 through the  
24 holiday season. They were pro DVS. We will not be  
25

1 repeating that, and so that's where that savings came  
2 from. That brings us to the 193, Mr. Chair.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. That's  
5 very helpful. I want to talk about the Peer  
6 Coordinator Program. Can you tell us how many Peer  
7 Coordinators you currently have on your staff, and  
8 were any of that staff-- any of the budgeted staff  
9 impacted by the PEG?

10 COMMISSIONER HENDON: First off, the  
11 budgeted staff was not impacted by the PEG. So the  
12 PEG hit our other than personnel services money. Our  
13 headcount wasn't reduced after this most recent  
14 budget-- budget cut.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Great.

16 COMMISSIONER HENDON: And then when we  
17 think about the services team-- we call it our  
18 Community Services Team. It's the group that deals  
19 with VA claims, so helping veterans with claims.  
20 It's a group that deals with care coordination. So  
21 if you call DVS and need direct case management,  
22 whatever goes on, that group triages you as far as  
23 figuring out, you know, who to connect you with, how  
24 to solve it, and it's the group that does housing and  
25 support services. This is the group that works with

1  
2 our veterans who are housing insecure to help them be  
3 okay. Total is 13 people on that Community Services  
4 Team; six are with the Housing and Support Services  
5 Unit; three are with the Care Coordination Unit; and  
6 there are four with the Claims Unit.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Got it. What is  
8 your goal for placements in FY24?

9 COMMISSIONER HENDON: So we've got two  
10 vacancies right now. So we're at-- it's 35  
11 ultimately, and we, you know, separate the two on  
12 protected leave. We've got 35 total authorized  
13 strength. Two are vacant. One is a Housing Support  
14 Services-- one of our Housing Coordinator positions.  
15 That job is posted, not just [nyc.gov/jobs](https://nyc.gov/jobs), but also  
16 on our newsletter. So if anyone goes to  
17 [nyc.gov/vetnewsletter](https://nyc.gov/vetnewsletter) you can see the job listed  
18 there. So that's one we're anticipated to hire  
19 within the coming weeks. The other opening is one  
20 we're looking to fill through the Civil Service  
21 Pathways Program, the Department of Citywide  
22 Administrative Services runs. That's a program where  
23 it will begin in August, and that's a situation where  
24 a certain number of fellows will be identified for  
25 the Civil Services Pathways Program. We're looking

2 to bring someone on in the policy arena. This is a  
3 policy vertical. There's a data vertical, and  
4 there's a finance vertical. So we're looking to  
5 bring someone on starting in August, and so that'll  
6 get us to 100 percent.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, I know  
8 identifying individuals is both homeless and veterans  
9 is a challenge and something that the City and  
10 agencies I think we all think can always do a better  
11 job on. What are some of the main roadblocks for  
12 veterans for accessing housing?

13 COMMISSIONER HENDON: I think when we--  
14 there's so many different places to take this, and I  
15 want to caveat it with I believe that the number one  
16 issues that affects all of our New Yorkers is access  
17 to affordable housing. So, when you look at a lot of  
18 our people, it's how can we help folks who are  
19 seeking affordable housing identify it? And so, you  
20 know, for us, we do what we can to help our veterans  
21 navigate the current Housing Connect platform and  
22 take advantage of the Mitchell-Lama veteran's  
23 preference, and things that speak affordable housing.  
24 When we speak to the veteran, those who are housing  
25 insecure-- so once again, it's 484 was the most

1 recent point in time count. That was the numbers  
2 from January of 2022. We don't have the numbers from  
3 the count for January 2023 yet. It's important to  
4 mention we were at 4,677 in 2011. So to go from  
5 almost 5,000 in 2011 to less than 500 most recently,  
6 you know, we made movement here. Functional zero is  
7 to get less than 400 as far as the total number, and  
8 for us it's working to identify supportive housing  
9 opportunities for those veterans who are in the  
10 shelter system now for whom that's the right fit, and  
11 we've been doing a lot on that front to help seed new  
12 development, especially providing support letters to  
13 anyone who is a developer who applies to the state's  
14 Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative saying I  
15 want to build veteran supportive housing. You know,  
16 we provided support letters to awardees which total  
17 more than 250 units in the pipeline. This will be  
18 similar what we see at Surf Vets in Coney Island as  
19 far and that platform, and a lot of it is our HSS  
20 team counseling veterans to put them at ease for  
21 those who are elected to do supportive housing to  
22 make it clear that this is something that-- there's  
23 certain impression of it that we work to breakdown as  
24  
25

2 far as in one-on-one engagements between our HSS team  
3 and the vets who are in the system.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Last question for  
5 me would be, just in general, how could we make it  
6 easier for veterans to receive the support they need?

7 COMMISSIONER HENDON: One of the hardest  
8 pieces of this job is the actual outreach. You know,  
9 members of the Veteran Committee know we always talk  
10 about issues with veterans self-identifying. I  
11 wanted to quote the newest numbers from the VA on  
12 this as far as those who are utilizing services.  
13 It's 33.6 percent nationally, 29.6 percent in the  
14 state, and now it's 24.2 percent in the City. So  
15 about 24.2 percent of all veterans in this city as of  
16 the most recent numbers from the VA are utilizing  
17 services and effectively self-identifying. You see  
18 me. There are three people you don't see. And so  
19 for us, it's trying to have as many of our partners  
20 as possible, including all of you, you know, within  
21 your capacities. Ask the question, and it's not are  
22 you a veteran, because there are people who will say  
23 I don't think I'm a veteran. It's, "Have you  
24 served?" And so to change that-- and so we've been  
25 working to do what we can to make sure that-- and I



2 mentioned this in a prior hearing, I'll say it again,  
3 that all of you have all the information we have when  
4 it comes to the veterans in your respective  
5 districts. So we've been in talks with the Speaker's  
6 Office to sign a Memorandum of Understanding where we  
7 will share all of our information with Speaker Adams  
8 so she can then get it to you. You'll know  
9 everything we know as far as all the contact  
10 information to kind of amplify what we're doing.  
11 Doing a similar thing with the New York State  
12 Assembly and the City's delegation, same thing with  
13 the State Senate and City's delegation, and same  
14 thing with the 14 federal elected officials who  
15 represent the five boroughs, and with the VA as well.  
16 VA's come to us locally often times and ask us  
17 questions about the veteran community, and so we want  
18 to make sure they have what we have too so that all  
19 of us can put hands on this and get the word out.  
20 We've already done outreach, I believe, to many of  
21 your offices. You may have received packets from us.  
22 We've done this to every single Community Board  
23 likewise, too, so that folks keep asking the  
24 question, and once you ask, you know, recommend them  
25 to us so we can help.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE:

3 Commissioner, mind if I jump in, too.

4 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Yeah, yeah, I'm  
5 sorry sir.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: No don't be  
7 sorry. Chair Holden and Chair Brannan thank you very  
8 much and the fellow Council Members for allowing the  
9 veteran budget to be discussed and to be here today.  
10 you know, it wasn't too long ago I was sitting in  
11 those seats, and now sitting in this seat, and just  
12 in the question you asked is the number-- what can we  
13 do better? How can we really help our vets? And you  
14 look at the sizes of our budget, and you hear the  
15 Commissioner give the amazing that work that his team  
16 and now our team do with that small amount of money.  
17 There is a lot that can be done, but so much of it is  
18 the initiative that's not financial. Each of the 51  
19 Council Members and so many of the Council Members  
20 that are up there, we say thank you for opening the  
21 door to DVS and working as a Veteran Resource Center  
22 in your district, and your Councilmatic office really  
23 becomes this resource center for the veterans in your  
24 Council District. It's very hard to get to Center  
25 Street or come into Manhattan, or to Queensborough

1 Hall or wherever those small locations can be, but  
2 we've had tremendous success working with each of the  
3 Council Members and the Commissioner has brought  
4 staff, has volunteers, has been able to put the  
5 pamphlets of what DVS is about. I mean, so many of  
6 the veterans just still getting aware of what that we  
7 have, a city agency that does veterans work. So,  
8 working together is something that we can continue to  
9 grow and work and not even be a budgetary item. Your  
10 \$2.87 million dollar budget that the Council puts in  
11 too is tremendous for council resources, and there's  
12 an opportunity there, I think, to take a look at  
13 that, especially as Finance Chair, and say are we  
14 utilizing that money the best way possible? Can we  
15 use an initiative in a different way that can serve  
16 each of the Council Members better? One of the  
17 things that the Commissioner and I and the team put  
18 together was a way to look at the discretionary  
19 funding. One of them is you have \$900,000 going to--  
20 for various community services. You might be able to  
21 put say another \$100,000 into that and make it each  
22 of the 51 Council Members get \$25,000, something we  
23 did for seniors, to allocate the need for the  
24 veterans in their district. Might be a better way to  
25

2 use the same money to then address each of the  
3 veterans throughout the City where the Council  
4 Members know best, because they work hardest in those  
5 districts. It's-- there may be even a way just to  
6 look at the way the funds are used in way that can be  
7 more beneficial for each of your districts to take a  
8 look at and how it can be used, because each district  
9 is so different from everybody else's district, and  
10 you know that best. So, we're up here today to kind  
11 of work with you to say thank you for those fundings  
12 that are in the budget. you know, obviously always  
13 try to increase what we can do with it, but for a  
14 team with a small amount of budget that they have, I  
15 have been-- a blessing to work with Commissioner  
16 Hendon and his team to see what they do for veterans,  
17 still being the only City agency in this country, and  
18 this Council did that, so thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. I'm  
20 going to hand it over to Chair Holden.

21 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair.  
22 We've been joined by Council Member Stevens,  
23 Schulman, and Narcisse. And nice to see Paul Vallone  
24 back in the Chambers. Again, welcome back, and we  
25 thank you for all your efforts. And we just

2 mentioned-- you took some of my questions already  
3 about the initiatives.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Sorry about  
5 that.

6 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And I'd like to make  
7 that \$50,000 actually, more than \$25,000. So I'm  
8 going to raise--

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE:  
10 [interposing] No argument.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I'm going to raise  
12 you now. Okay. But thanks. But Commissioner,  
13 again, thank you for your testimony. DVS is one of  
14 the smallest, if not the smallest, city agencies, and  
15 yet it took, you know, a 2.5 percent reduction for  
16 next Fiscal Year in this plan. And if we add the  
17 reductions in November and the Preliminary Plans, DVS  
18 has seen its Fiscal 24 city funding be reduced by 20  
19 percent. So, and I know this is a question and I  
20 don't want to put you on the spot, but why was DVS  
21 not exempt from the PEG reductions in the first  
22 place, because of the size of the agency? Because  
23 you're taking a bigger hit. Did you-- was this  
24 something you expressed to OMB?

25 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Mr. Chair--

2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [interposing] Not to  
3 get you in trouble or anything.

4 COMMISSIONER HENDON: We recognize the  
5 environment we're in right now and the situation that  
6 affects all city agencies, and you know, we look to  
7 our left and our right at our other agencies as  
8 brothers and sisters in the fox hole here. Everyone  
9 was asked to make certain sacrifices, and we joined  
10 in as well, and we found what we thought was the way  
11 to do this while still balancing being right with our  
12 constituents as far as our service members and their  
13 families.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: But it doesn't seem  
15 that you-- I mean, obviously, your staff is small, so  
16 you were particularly hit hard during the pandemic,  
17 and that hit probably your agency harder than most.  
18 But I don't see, you know, with the PEG and the  
19 reductions. It's not going to affect you more than  
20 some other larger agency. So, this is an issue that  
21 I think we will bring up hopefully in negotiators  
22 with the Mayor, but there has to be some common sense  
23 here where you can't reach everyone. You can't even  
24 communicate through the mail like you should, we know  
25 that. So I think there's a-- by nitpicking your

1 agency, it's really harming the veterans in our city.

2 So that's more of a statement than a question, but--

3  
4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE:

5 [interposing] Do you want to put in something that  
6 says all agency under 40 employees are exempt. It'd  
7 only be us. We'd be happy to support that.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: That's a very good  
9 idea.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Yeah, we  
11 really do for what the Commissioner has with the  
12 staff compared to agencies that have over 1,500  
13 staff.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: but I remember at a  
15 hearing, Commissioner, we had months ago that you  
16 were-- you had four positions available, and we  
17 weren't getting-- we weren't getting answers from  
18 OMB. You actually interviewed the people that you  
19 were-- the candidates. Have the-- any been hired  
20 since-- like, you did say few.

21 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Correct. We were--  
22 we-- I believe it was-- and Glenda, please tell me if  
23 I'm off on this. we had-- there was a point when we  
24 had seven that, you know, we needed to-- we did not  
25 have those filled, and then in November we got the

2 green light to fill them. By the end of the year we  
3 did fill them, just to speak to the turnaround on it.  
4 And so we are grateful for that as far as, you know,  
5 just being able to get us what we've got right now,  
6 Mr. Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right, but it seems  
8 like it's taking a ridiculous amount of time to hire  
9 people, because I know that it's-- you selected the  
10 candidates, and then OMB wasn't getting back to you,  
11 right? Am I correct on that?

12 COMMISSIONER HENDON: I think for us it  
13 was the issue of the-- getting the approval. And  
14 like I said, I'll defer Glenda to add anything if I'm  
15 missing here. But it was getting the approval to be  
16 able to hire, and then we got that approval, and from  
17 the point we got the approval to when we were able to  
18 on-board those folks it was-- it was less than two  
19 months. It was less than eight weeks from when we  
20 got the green light and we were able to bring them  
21 on, so yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So, using my office  
23 as a Veteran Resource Center has proven popular with  
24 the veterans in my Council District, and you  
25 mentioned that it would be nice if everyone had that.



2 Can you talk to that, the feedback that you've gotten  
3 from other Council Districts that are doing it?

4 COMMISSIONER HENDON: We have been just  
5 thrilled to be able to go to the different Council  
6 Members' offices, particularly for yours and for  
7 Council Member Paladino to have someone there where  
8 the veteran can meet them in their community if they  
9 have any needs, and then as Council Member Paladino  
10 was mentioning, she's got folks who come out from,  
11 you know, way beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> to see, you know, Tonya  
12 Thomas [sp?] whom we've had come in. I know we've  
13 had her in your office as well, and so we know it has  
14 been effective, and that is something where, you  
15 know, given, you know, more staff, we would seek to  
16 expand that as far as more pop-up Veteran Resource  
17 Centers so that you can have someone within your  
18 district office come on a day and just provide  
19 services for the veterans in your local community.

20 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So, if we did it for  
21 all 51 Council districts, have you ever, you know,  
22 come up with a plan if you did that, a Veterans  
23 Resource person in every Council office every other  
24 week let's say, could you come up with a budget on  
25

2 that and how much you could-- how you could serve the  
3 entire city that way?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: We  
5 definitely need more.

6 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: No, but could you  
7 give us a number?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Well, I  
9 don't know about the number so much, but I think what  
10 you could do is obviously we'd need a larger team,  
11 but at some point--

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [interposing] Well,  
13 that's what I'm trying to point out.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: the Council  
15 Member's staffs themselves, I think they'll get to a  
16 point where we can train and work with you so that  
17 you can become an intake center and become a focal  
18 point for the veterans whether there's a DVS staff  
19 there or not, and then we can help coordinate on  
20 certain days that we're actually doing applications  
21 or amendments, or some type of service-related  
22 request that they can't come to our office for. So,  
23 it may not be that you need every staffing person to  
24 be at every Council Member's office. It could be a  
25 rotation. I'll definitely defer to the staff, but I

2 think we need a little bit more time to tell you the  
3 headcounts on how many we need.

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: But I think that  
5 should be our goal in the agency, right, would you  
6 say?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: it would be  
8 great. It would be great.

9 COMMISSIONER HENDON: I think in the near  
10 term asking the question is so critical, and so just  
11 to ask that question, "Have you ever served in the US  
12 Armed Forces?"

13 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: But it's bringing--

14 COMMISSIONER HENDON: [interposing] And  
15 just to reach out.

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: It's bringing  
17 services to their homes, to the district. That means  
18 it's much more convenient for the veterans, which I  
19 think we should be looking at. So, I'd like if  
20 somehow we can do a plan that if we could do that,  
21 whether it's obviously in the next budget, but we can  
22 actually reach that goal. I would like at least your  
23 agency to think about that. You said-- you testified  
24 that there's 482 vets that are homeless in the  
25 system. Can you tell us where they are? I mean, I

2 know some are at Borden, Borden Avenue Shelter, but  
3 do we know where they are, where they're located?

4 COMMISSIONER HENDON: I don't have that  
5 down to the number on me, and that's based on the  
6 point-in-time count from last January. I know that  
7 we have 254 beds at Borden Avenue, veteran's  
8 residence in Queens. I know that we also have a good  
9 number of our veterans at Tillery [sp?], at Two  
10 Bridges, as far as one of the other shelters here,  
11 and at Barbara Kleiman, as far as the top places  
12 where our folks are located. Once again it's Borden  
13 Avenue is number one, and then you've got Tillery,  
14 Barbara Kleiman, and Two Bridges as far as Department  
15 of Homeless Services sites. They're not all there,  
16 but the largest conglomerations of them are.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So the 482, how does  
18 that compare to the previous years in New York City,  
19 the homeless population of veterans?

20 COMMISSIONER HENDON: We've got to get  
21 the exact number for you, but I know that it's  
22 already-- oh, wait, we got it. So it's-- the prior  
23 year was 625. The year before that was 688, Mr.  
24 Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you. Now, it's  
3 my-- you know, it's my feeling, and this is a  
4 budgetary item, too, but I don't think we should have  
5 a congregate shelter for homeless vets. There should  
6 be transitional and supportive housing. They should  
7 go right into it. They've earned that. So, again,  
8 something pie in the sky, if we could use and do away  
9 with the congregate shelter and we're already trying  
10 to do that with the private rooms at Borden, and DHS  
11 has, I guess, ordered that. It should come in June.  
12 I think you had mentioned in a previous-- but again,  
13 what would prohibit our veterans from just moving  
14 right into supportive housing?

15 COMMISSIONER HENDON: I think that there  
16 are two pieces to this conversation. One is the  
17 creation of housing, but really another key piece is  
18 the openness to moving in the house. You-- many of  
19 our veterans have a certain stigma, those who are in  
20 the shelter system right now, against supportive  
21 housing who've had bad impressions, heard some  
22 stories. So there's a piece of this that also  
23 involves working with the veterans to get them  
24 comfortable with this as well. So it's just as  
25 important as erecting these types of opportunities. I

2 just wanted to be clear about that, Mr. Chair. We're  
3 in a place where now-- as we approach function zero  
4 it's a more challenging pieces as far as this  
5 particular community and a lot of it goes back to  
6 convincing, you know, those individuals, "Hey look  
7 this is, you know, this is doable. This is something  
8 that can-- that you can embrace." A lot of folks  
9 have certain stigmas.

10 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: NO, I think we  
11 should work toward that. I think that should be our  
12 goal. As my Veterans Committee and as your agency.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: And Council  
14 Member, you could have additional help with  
15 additional Council Members in each of your districts  
16 as an affordable housing projects becomes an idea and  
17 starts to grow in the district. There's always going  
18 to be a conversation of a certain percentage set  
19 aside for veterans to increase affordability and to  
20 get them into that housing, and that's always  
21 something we had always wished for to create that  
22 percentage allotment specifically for veterans, and I  
23 know it's very difficult to do, but that would be an  
24 immediate and a quick way to do that.

2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Let's talk about the  
3 Veterans Treatment Courts a little bit. Does your--  
4 and I know-- I just want to get this on the record,  
5 but I know the answer is, but does your agency work  
6 with all, you know-- do you work at all with the  
7 Veteran Treatment Courts?

8 COMMISSIONER HENDON: We have a line of  
9 communication with those who are involved in the  
10 Veteran Treatment Court process. We recognize that  
11 the program is run through the State, but we do have  
12 lines of communication with the various district  
13 attorney's offices.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Because I just-- I  
15 wanted to talk about the mentorships, which they're  
16 not-- they're unpaid now, right? They don't get a  
17 stipend from the City, so the mentorships are so  
18 important. Does the peer-- the Veteran Peer  
19 Coordinators, do they act as peers to the Veteran  
20 Treatment Courts?

21 COMMISSIONER HENDON: They do not.  
22 There's a certain entity for this, which Herb Sweat  
23 [sp?] who testified a few months ago at a hearing,  
24 which he is the Executive Director of and Founder.  
25 It's United Veterans Mentors Corporation. So you

2 have a nonprofit now that didn't exist just a few  
3 years ago, but now is off the ground that is the area  
4 where if I'm a mentor and I'm looking for support to  
5 just help me to be able to be my best mentor,  
6 everything from how I am getting from this conference  
7 to that, to you know, I'm taking my mentee [sic] out  
8 to get something at the diner, how could I pay for  
9 it, even get there? That's things that are going  
10 through Mr. Sweat's nonprofit.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So, if the members  
12 had some initiatives, we could fund the mentorship  
13 program.

14 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Because right now  
16 there's only a few and it's so important.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: There's  
18 barely any.

19 COMMISSIONER HENDON: He's-- yeah, Mr.  
20 Sweat is the only nonprofit that we are aware of that  
21 has this. So he's--

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [interposing] There's  
23 one.

24 COMMISSIONER HENDON: active-- he's  
25 active in Brooklyn and Manhattan BTC's, but that



2 nonprofit, its goal is to be a place where someone  
3 who's interested in becoming a mentor can go and have  
4 the right support and mentorship--

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [interposing] So we  
6 could fund that, yes.

7 COMMISSIONER HENDON: themselves to be a  
8 mentor. Yes, Mr. Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: We could fund that.  
10 And right now--

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE:  
12 [interposing] And the five District Attorneys would  
13 support that.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: That's  
16 their [inaudible]

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: But right now, we had  
18 a hearing on that, and it is a problem because they  
19 don't even get a stipend. They don't even get car  
20 fare. So that is an issue, and we do need the not-  
21 for-profit that we do have, and we need to increase  
22 the funding that. Just wanted a few questions on  
23 mental health services for veterans. Does the  
24 Executive Plan add any funding to expand mental  
25 health services for veterans?

2 COMMISSIONER HENDON: For us with the  
3 mental health services, we've worked to use the  
4 state's funding, that Dwyer program, as a way to get  
5 that money out to the community so many of our  
6 veteran organization can normalize help-seeking  
7 behavior amongst our folks. Beyond that, what we  
8 current do on the mental health space is we have a  
9 Crisis Intercept Mapping initiative. It's a  
10 community of practice amongst those mental health  
11 practitioners who believe in working to help veterans  
12 who are in crisis. You know, also we through our Vet  
13 Connect NYC platform, we are able to provide  
14 referrals when there are mental health emergencies  
15 that emerge from our veterans, so tying folks into  
16 the appropriate assistance. And then we've-- just  
17 one of those new hires was a licensed clinical social  
18 worker who is our Director of Care Coordination and  
19 Mental Health, and that's Doctor Lauren DeMelo [sp?].  
20 So we've got someone on staff now. We didn't have  
21 just a few months ago. We're-- if there's a mental  
22 health first aid crisis we have someone who can  
23 triage that right away who has that expertise.

24 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So, you know, when I  
25 visited the Borden Shelter a few times, the number

1  
2 one complaint was mental health services from the men  
3 there on Borden-- at Borden, and the next was food.  
4 And you know, what can we do to better serve the  
5 mental health part of that. I know what we can do  
6 about the food, I'm trying to deal with that, but the  
7 mental health services. For instance, the NYU Mental  
8 Health Program has a waiting list. They don't have  
9 enough funding. So, I'm looking at initiatives  
10 probably from the Council, but what can the Mayor's--  
11 what would the-- in the-- like, in the perfect world  
12 again, what could we do to really support our  
13 veterans and make sure they're getting the mental  
14 health, because most of-- probably the men at the  
15 shelter like I mentioned complained about that when I  
16 asked them. But it doesn't seem like we're  
17 addressing it with any particular funding. The Mayor  
18 has designated mental health additional funds, but I  
19 just want to make sure it gets to our veterans. So  
20 what programs other than the state you mentioned,  
21 that the City is providing our veterans, mental  
22 health.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Well, I'll  
24 start off and then hand off to the Commissioner. I  
25 think one of-- when you were there and we were there

2 together at Borden, one of the things that the  
3 veterans themselves said was coordination of care  
4 there at Borden. Like, they had to continually go to  
5 other agencies for help. so in our eyes a way to  
6 simplify things for vets, if they're in that time of  
7 need, is to bring those resources there so that they  
8 don't have to go to 17 different places to get an ID  
9 card, to get their mental health treatment, to get  
10 their-- the checks with affordability for where they  
11 need to go for a hospital treatment to organize with  
12 the VA for their care. That was something that the  
13 Commissioner, myself and the Council Members who were  
14 there at the-- at Borden would be very beneficial to  
15 increase that directly to where to the veterans are.

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [inaudible] Thank  
17 you for that. I'm going to shift over to my-- this  
18 is one of my priorities, the VFW's and the American  
19 Legion Halls and trying to help them. How much  
20 funding has DVS provided to support the VFW's and  
21 American Legion Halls in the Fiscal Year 23, and how  
22 much is projected in 24, Fiscal Year 24?

23 COMMISSIONER HENDON: WE have to get back  
24 to you on that as far as exact number, Mr. Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So, we know, like,  
3 what are some the expense and capital needs of VFW's  
4 and American Legion Halls have? I know I have  
5 different halls in my district and most of it seems  
6 to be capital, which we can address. And but we also  
7 need some expertise in how to run and how to, you  
8 know,-- let's say many of them have, the have the  
9 space for catering, and then they need some advice,  
10 let's say, on how to successfully raise funds. Do  
11 you provide any service on that from--

12 COMMISSIONER HENDON: [interposing] So,  
13 our Veteran Business Leadership Association is  
14 designed not only to work with veteran-owned  
15 businesses, small business, but also veteran-led  
16 nonprofits to include our 501 C19's. And so that is  
17 something that's available as a resource to our VSO's  
18 who need it. I feel like the-- to me, the deeper  
19 issue is getting more young people into the VSO's,  
20 and that's something that's key to us as far as  
21 working to--

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [interposing] Yeah, I  
23 think they eventually will. It's always-- but in  
24 every generation that I spoke to there was that gap,  
25 and eventually when they get older they come to that,

2 but I think yeah, you're right, in just trying to get  
3 some services and talk to them about, you know,  
4 mentoring even, even on that basis, mentoring.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: And Chair  
6 Holden, you had-- and all the Council Members that  
7 are here and that are open to it, we had worked with  
8 you in January when you opened the door for  
9 discretionary funding and capital funding requests  
10 for the budget. A lot of the VSOs and the VFWs  
11 aren't aware that of process. So, a lot of the  
12 Council Members were tremendous in helping to-- like  
13 the Commissioner said, start to become aware of that.  
14 So, each of the Council Members can be very  
15 beneficial and helpful and getting that information  
16 and getting those applications to the veterans  
17 directly so they can make the capital requests, so  
18 they can make a discretionary request, and a lot of  
19 them whether it's through age or just not being aware  
20 or not having the technical capabilities of doing it  
21 will shy away from that. We pushed really hard  
22 starting this January, DVS and with the Council  
23 Members, to make that awareness. It was on our  
24 website. We went to the Council Members offices, and  
25 as a result, some of the VFWs and a lot of the

2 elected have agreed to help with the disability  
3 ramps, the funding for the heating for the roofs, the  
4 green compliance that now has to happen, they don't  
5 have the funds for that.

6 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: So we can  
8 be a tremendous help in assisting going forward on  
9 that.

10 COMMISSIONER HENDON: And that's  
11 [nyc.gov/vetcouncilfunding](http://nyc.gov/vetcouncilfunding). We've kept it up. Is has  
12 the old information, but--

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE:  
14 [interposing] Still up.

15 COMMISSIONER HENDON: [inaudible] but  
16 it's up for any of our veterans who are listening who  
17 want to look at that, [nyc.gov/vetcouncilfunding](http://nyc.gov/vetcouncilfunding). I'd  
18 be remiss if we didn't talk about defibrillators when  
19 we speak about our American Legions our V-- our  
20 Veterans of Foreign Wars Lodges. We had a gentleman  
21 at American Legion post in Harlem last year pass away  
22 where if a defibrillator was present, that wouldn't  
23 have occurred. And so that's just something that,  
24 you know, we're going to do what we can on that end  
25 to try to help and even working with Council to find

2 ways to see to it that our veteran lodges, our VFW  
3 posts, our American Legions that they have  
4 defibrillators present.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: That's a  
6 great point and the Council used to fund that, two  
7 defibrillators for each district for a nonprofit, but  
8 as of last year or two we kind of ran out of money  
9 for that, but if we were to bring that back, this  
10 could be a veteran-based focus, because every one of  
11 those VFWs and nonprofits do not have. That could be  
12 a tremendous help.

13 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right. I just want  
14 to talk-- I have a few more questions and I'll turn  
15 it over to my colleagues. Has DVS coordinated with  
16 DOH, DCWP or other agencies to assist veterans and  
17 disabled veteran vendors? Because that's been an  
18 issue for quite some time.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Well, with  
20 the vendors, I mean, that's one of the things I've  
21 been working on since day one and a lot of that  
22 happens on unintended consequences for good  
23 legislation. Sometimes when we expanded the vendor  
24 licenses in the previous council, we forgot to take  
25 into account that veterans have a protected class.



2 So there is a good-- to give immigrants new  
3 opportunity, to get vendor licenses is a great idea,  
4 but sometimes in that there are protected classes  
5 that sometimes get forgotten. The veteran vendors  
6 were one of those, and that's one of the situations  
7 that can be easily rectified, and it becomes one of  
8 the DVS's biggest assistance, and a lot of the  
9 gentleman are here today, and to try to coordinate  
10 how we protect that class of vendors that are  
11 veterans and have a disability--

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [interposing] Well,  
13 it seems to be, though, there's a miscommunication  
14 between certain agencies and the City, not knowing  
15 the regulations--

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE:  
17 [interposing] And now they just switched it--

18 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: not knowing the  
19 rules, not knowing what to do.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Now they  
21 just switched it to Sanitation, so its--

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [interposing] Right.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Enforcement  
24 is very difficult with vendors throughout the City.  
25 So we agree with you, DVS plays a critical role in

2 trying to be a negotiator there, but that's not a  
3 regulation--

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [interposing] We just  
5 don't seem to be getting anywhere, though. That's  
6 the-- that's what I-- you know how we-- so when was  
7 the last time a DVS staff member assisted a veteran  
8 vendor?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Oh, that's  
10 on a daily basis.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: It's ongoing?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Yeah,  
13 that's-- the emails will come in. We'll make a call.  
14 We'll try to coordinate with the Police Department  
15 who's the Community Affairs Office Officer with DSNY  
16 to get the new-- who's going to be the facilitator.  
17 They're usually at the same locations. So having a  
18 good partnership like with the Times Square Alliance  
19 with the certain nine vendors that are there is  
20 critical, because then they can call up and we can  
21 call up, and then you don't have to get the police  
22 involved, and a lot of that is like you said joint  
23 effort. It's difficult. It's certainly difficult  
24 for DVS with 35 staff, but if we can highlight the  
25 need and make sure that veterans are protected. If

2 there's any future expansion of legislation,-- I know  
3 on the state level they're looking to expand it  
4 again, and I had to bring that conversation up with  
5 the Commissioner to say look, if we're going to  
6 expand it, you got to protect our veterans.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Alright. On that  
8 subject, though, is DVS in contact with any veteran  
9 who sits on the Street Vendor Advisory Board, and has  
10 DVS worked at all with the Street Vendor Advisory  
11 Board as a whole to try to solve some of these  
12 issues.

13 COMMISSIONER HENDON: We maintain a line  
14 of communication with SBS as far as our-- you know,  
15 SBS has a seat at the table on that board, so we stay  
16 in communication with them.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: SBS has  
18 been a good partner for that.

19 COMMISSIONER HENDON: But there's more we  
20 can do there, Mr. Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Alright.

22 COMMISSIONER HENDON: I want to add  
23 something to what Paul was saying, too. A key piece  
24 of this also is it echoes other kinds of  
25 conversations we have as far as who is in our

2 community. and so, you know, we were able to obtain  
3 from DCWP a list of all of our veteran street  
4 vendors, and so we are looking to hold some sort of  
5 even to bring them together so that all of our  
6 brothers and sisters in that community also know who  
7 one another are, you know, know everybody. And to  
8 have even greater power and a greater voice on things  
9 as well, and so that's something that we are making  
10 it our goal to get off the ground next month.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: It seems to be it's  
12 an ongoing issue, and I think we have to address  
13 that. One more question, and then I'll turn it over  
14 to my colleagues. DVS did not receive any new  
15 funding for new needs as I see it. Are there any new  
16 programs or services other than what we mentioned  
17 today that if funded could help in your work as an  
18 agency? I know that's a-- there's a lot of things  
19 probably, but what would be-- Commissioner, what  
20 would be your project, your pet project that you feel  
21 that you could do much better if you had additional  
22 funding, other than what we've mentioned?

23 COMMISSIONER HENDON: I was going to-- I  
24 was thinking about--

2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [interposing] I mean,  
3 I would say communications with our veterans, a  
4 different--

5 COMMISSIONER HENDON: [interposing] A lot  
6 of it-- yeah, a lot of it comes to the-- it's the--  
7 the thing in the back of my mind with this job right  
8 now is the marketing pieces.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Marketing, right.

10 COMMISSIONER HENDON: To get more  
11 veterans to use benefits. And something to say--  
12 this came up last year. It's going to come up again.  
13 The VA is performing another market assessment of all  
14 its properties here, around the country but including  
15 in New York City. Last time I did an assessment was  
16 FY2019. As a result of that assessment was initial  
17 recommendation to effectively shut down the Brooklyn  
18 VA and the Manhattan VA. And so that assessment will  
19 be performed again no later than the end of this  
20 federal Fiscal Year. The way to move the needle in  
21 that is to have more of our people use VA healthcare.  
22 And so for us, it's whatever we can do to help more  
23 of our brothers and sisters know about VA healthcare  
24 as an option so that we can still keep what we have.  
25 There are enough veterans to use the services, the

1 systems here. A lot of folks just don't know about  
2 it, don't know about its benefits. We've got over  
3 15,000 veterans in this city using Medicaid, for  
4 instance, who are not using VA healthcare but who are  
5 eligible just in New York City alone, and so I feel  
6 like that's, like, a larger thing in the back of my  
7 mind that we are working-- some of the reason why we  
8 care about sharing information with all of you, other  
9 elected officials, and the VA, to do what we can to  
10 increase the number of folks who use these benefits  
11 so we don't lose them. And by the way, those  
12 veterans who do use the VA healthcare system bring  
13 over \$1.8 billion dollars into this city each year.  
14 So there's so many other pieces of it, but that's the  
15 big one for me. And then things on the Council side  
16 that we'd already discussed were-- when the time  
17 comes, a nonprofit that does Veteran Treatment Court  
18 support. I think that's a key piece. And something  
19 else that I think may also be able to be done on the  
20 Council side if and when it comes is legal services  
21 for non-citizen veterans. I'd be remiss if I didn't  
22 speak to that as far as another need where the  
23 Council, you know, support in that area which would  
24 be very invaluable.  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you for that,  
3 Commissioner. We were joined by Council Member  
4 Brewer, Sanchez, and I believe Council Member  
5 Williams was here for a little bit. Thank you.  
6 Alright, back to you Chair Brannan.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we  
8 have questions from Councilman Carr.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you, Chairs,  
10 for putting together this important hearing.  
11 Commissioner, good to see you. A lot of the  
12 questions about the agency budget have kind of been  
13 answered already in the prior questioning. So, but I  
14 just want to thank Deputy Commissioner Vallone for  
15 mentioning the Beating Hearts initiative, 1.3 AD's a  
16 year per council district. It was a great program.  
17 I was sorry to see it not make last year's budget,  
18 but there's still very much a need, particularly with  
19 their VFW and American Legion Posts. One of the  
20 biggest benefits the City provides to our vets is not  
21 through the DVS budget, it's the Alternative Veterans  
22 Exemption. It keeps a number of veterans not only in  
23 their homes, but maybe even keeps them from selling  
24 and moving to other jurisdictions, and we very much  
25 want to keep our vets here, A, because this is their

1 home, but B, as you say, vets contribute so much to  
2 the communities they call home. And we expanded that  
3 exemption in 2015, and one of the big things that was  
4 left undone last term was having the Cold War  
5 Veterans Exemption enacted. The state authorized the  
6 City to opt in a number of years ago. Actually, I  
7 think Deputy Commissioner Vallone was a co-sponsor of  
8 the bill last term. It is currently pending Intro  
9 377 by Minority Leader Borelli. A number of us on  
10 this dais are co-sponsors today. I think one of the  
11 best things we could do for the veteran community is  
12 to allow those who serve during the Cold War era but  
13 not necessarily in combat to access the same tax  
14 exemption that we give to combat vets. I know it's--  
15 I know you're not the Commissioner of Finance, but I  
16 think that, you know, Commissioner Sutton, the  
17 Inaugural Commissioner did a lot to advocate for the  
18 expansion of the Alternative Veterans Exemption a few  
19 years ago. I think you have a unique platform to  
20 help us move this along and maybe get a commitment  
21 from the Administration to support enactment of this  
22 bill, and I'm just wondering if that's something you  
23 think you could help us with and what your thoughts  
24 on that are.  
25



2 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Thank you so much  
3 for the question to Council Member Carr. I think for  
4 us, when we talk about the moving entire bell curve  
5 of our people to the right, the largest swath of that  
6 bell curve is many of our folks who are within this  
7 affordable housing community, including those who own  
8 property, and we recognize that it's slightly over  
9 15,000 of our veterans who are-- who we estimate to  
10 be property owner who are Cold War era, or who have  
11 not served in combat. And so, you know, for us it's  
12 a question of what can be done to look at this as far  
13 as in this current climate how do we land the plane  
14 where we can be right by these more than 15,000  
15 veterans who own property in the City, yet who are  
16 also-- who have not served in combat and therefore  
17 cannot take advantage of these different exemptions.  
18 So we're happy to talk, you know, with the folks  
19 internally on these things, but just now we're very--  
20 we've been monitoring this issue closely on the DVS  
21 side, Mr. Council Member Carr, yeah.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Yeah, we  
23 definitely support that initiative. That is a way--  
24 you know, you talk about how do you get to affordable  
25 housing. One of the last ways you can do that is with

2 the very small tax exemptions that are out there.  
3 Why it's not uniform for every veteran, it doesn't  
4 make any sense. You're a veteran, you should be  
5 entitled to the exemption, period. The State has  
6 given the City the ability to do that. I think we  
7 should just do that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I appreciate your  
9 answers. Thank you so much, and I want to associate  
10 myself with the comments of Chair Holden earlier  
11 about a member-designated initiative for our Legion  
12 of VFW posts. Incredibly important and it's-- be a  
13 big step forward that we as a Council could take. I  
14 turn it back to the Chair. Thank you.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Thank you,  
16 Council Member.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,  
18 Councilman Carr. Now we have questions from  
19 Councilman Kagan.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you Chairs  
21 for hosting this very important hearing. I would  
22 like also to thank Commissioner and everyone who's  
23 testifying today, and of course our great veterans.  
24 Thank you for joining us today, and thank you for  
25 your great service to our country. As an immigrant I

1  
2 appreciate it even more than people who sometimes  
3 take liberties for granted. So, first of all, I  
4 would like to mention that I would like to invite  
5 Commissioner to visit the 47<sup>th</sup> Council District  
6 including, you mentioned, Surf Vets on Surf Avenue  
7 and Marlboro Military Post on Avenue X [sic]. I  
8 would love to visit with you. But talking about  
9 homelessness, of course it's not just the Department  
10 of Veterans Services but also Department of  
11 Homelessness Services. Even one homeless veteran is  
12 an embarrassment and shame for our city. so I still  
13 don't understand why we're doing it to cut-- even if  
14 it's \$0.7 million dollars from what I see, it's still  
15 significant to me. I think it should be increased,  
16 not cut. That's my personal opinion that this should  
17 be-- budget should be increased. You mentioned that  
18 it's just less than 25 percent of veterans using the  
19 services. So this money could be used even for  
20 promotional campaigns. Of course, on my side and  
21 every Council Member, of course, would be happy to  
22 promote all services that you're providing, but it  
23 should be even bigger than that, you know. That  
24 costs money, any kind of media campaign. So you  
25 clearly need more money for promotional services. So

2 it shouldn't be just 25 percent of New York City  
3 veterans know about services. It should be much,  
4 much more. And that's [inaudible] so do you feel  
5 that you need increase of the budget, not decrease of  
6 your budget? That's obvious question. I believe you  
7 need more money, not less.

8 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Thank you so much  
9 for the question, Council Member Kagan, yeah. And  
10 I'll take you up on any opportunity to go and visit  
11 the 47<sup>th</sup> and go back to Surf Vets. Anyone standing  
12 here, you know, in my spot who's an agency head is  
13 going to tell you that they'll take more money, that  
14 they could use more resources and so we're no  
15 different. For us, in the situation that we're in  
16 it's been-- the blade of the guillotine sharpens the  
17 mind in that we've been trying to be very intentional  
18 with what we are doing with the money that we have,  
19 and even thinking out of the box with what to go  
20 after. And so for us, things like, you know,  
21 applying for funding from New York City service to be  
22 able to have two Americore folks on board with us in  
23 the coming Fiscal Year where things like applying for  
24 more VA grant opportunities available, including  
25 those that deal with homeless outreach, so another

2 way to increase the size of the team that does these  
3 services. And so-- and then the partnerships, even  
4 reaching out to, you know, all of you to make sure  
5 you have all the veterans we have as far as  
6 supporting outreach. So we're doing everything we  
7 can to try to, even with this backdrop, meet the  
8 mission of being right with our service members and  
9 their families.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: I would also say  
11 that maybe even press conferences, and not just like  
12 these major media outlets, but also there's all kinds  
13 of community and ethnic media that would be also very  
14 helpful to promote your own services.

15 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Thank you so much.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
18 Schulman?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Good afternoon.  
20 So I have a couple of questions. One, first, Deputy  
21 Commissioner Vallone, I want to welcome you back to  
22 the Chamber, but I also think that your proposal  
23 about the budget in terms of each of the Council  
24 Members I think is really important, because I think  
25 that depending on the district and getting from one

2 pot, it's-- the services are uneven. So, and, you  
3 know, I would like to work more closely with you on  
4 that issue, and our veterans don't, I think, get  
5 enough services to be quite honest. So, and I think  
6 that part of that is just communication issue and  
7 figuring out what's available and all that. So I  
8 personally want to work with you more closely. So  
9 that's one. I do want to ask-- I know the Chair  
10 asked very briefly about your interaction with  
11 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, but can you  
12 tell me how you collaborate with them? Because as  
13 the Health Chair, I want to try and be helpful to our  
14 vets who deserve-- like, they have a lot of needs in  
15 terms of health services.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Well, I'll  
17 let the Commissioner tackle that part, but the first  
18 part-- and thank you Council Member Schulman. It's  
19 good to be back. It's been a long six months of  
20 recovering from the surgery, and it's great to see my  
21 fellow Council Members that just amazing job you're  
22 all doing. The Council funding that passed last year  
23 was \$2.87. Almost half of that went to veteran's  
24 community development, and of that, almost a million  
25

2 of that went within city agencies, and I don't know  
3 what accountability was done--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
5 Yeah, not to the vets.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: and, you  
7 know, once a Council Member always a Council Member.  
8 You always want to add, somebody will get back to you  
9 and say what did you do with that money.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: So, if that  
12 might be the area where you can shift to each of the  
13 Council Members so you can have direct supervision in  
14 what happens, or we can grow it like Council Member  
15 Holden said, even a larger number so that we can  
16 actually start getting into the communities with  
17 that. And yes, I'll turn over the second part of  
18 that to the Commissioner.

19 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Thank you so much  
20 for the question to Council Member Schulman. So it's  
21 a couple of different ways that we interact with the  
22 Department of Health, and I want to flag that in the  
23 last Administration we fell under a different Deputy  
24 Mayor. Now we do fall under Deputy Mayor Ann  
25 Williams-Isom, so we fall within the--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]

3 Oh, you do, okay.

4 COMMISSIONER HENDON: We're in-- we're--  
5 we are where we belong, right, in Health and Human  
6 Services.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Great.

8 COMMISSIONER HENDON: And so because of  
9 that, we got good relations with the folks there and  
10 with Health + Hospitals and with Departments-- just  
11 other groups, it's just good to be under one  
12 leadership chain. So three examples of ways that we  
13 are in collaboration with Department of Health. One  
14 is that state program that I mentioned where the  
15 state is sending us \$400,000 per year that we're  
16 pushing out to the veteran community. That is  
17 actually sent from the Office of Mental Health at the  
18 state level to DOHMH, and then we work with them. So  
19 we obtain it and then going to execute. That's one  
20 way we work. Another way is the Get Covered NYC  
21 program has an off-shoot specific to veterans where  
22 it's Covered NYC Vet, and so that's something that  
23 Department of Health and Public Engagement Unit  
24 effectively own, but we've worked with them so that  
25 we have-- you can text Covered NYC Vet to 55676 and



2 have someone reach out to you, ask you certain  
3 questions to help you with either VA healthcare  
4 enrollment tying you into us, or enrolling in the New  
5 York State of Health if you are not eligible. And so  
6 that's something else we do with Department of  
7 Health. And then last but not least, you know, we  
8 just started talks with DOH about how do you bill  
9 Medicaid for services? If there are any services  
10 we're providing where it makes sense to bill Medicaid  
11 for them. Medically tailored meals is an example, or  
12 even aftercare-- follow-up, wrap-around social  
13 services support to those who are homeless and need  
14 housing is another example.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

16 COMMISSIONER HENDON: We're working with  
17 them to figure out how we can just take advantage of  
18 that to find different ways to still obtain water in  
19 the desert, so to speak.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, no, thank  
21 you. And we're-- I'm working with DOHMH on trying to  
22 get a handle on a lot of chronic diseases, including  
23 diabetes, which I just passed the first citywide  
24 Diabetes Reduction Plan. So the Department of Health  
25 and Mental Hygiene has a year to come up with a plan

2 with set goals, metrics, timelines, etcetera so that  
3 we can help people throughout the City get a handle  
4 on diabetes, which was a factor in COVID and is also  
5 something that is debilitating, and I'm sure for  
6 veterans as well. So, thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
9 Narcisse?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good afternoon.  
11 Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Commissioner James  
12 Hendon. I'm happy to see you again, and thank you  
13 for all your help. One of the things we spoke about  
14 earlier about the veterans, any new development? I  
15 make it my business. Anything that come in front of  
16 me, I ask for the veterans, how many appointment I'm  
17 going to get for the veterans in our city. One of  
18 the thing I heard too earlier to divide \$25,000  
19 evenly. I forget the name, sorry. We cannot-- I  
20 mean, actually I'm one of the person that [inaudible]  
21 for 51 City Council. We each have-- you know, we  
22 unique. We each have our own issues. So first of  
23 all, I would like to know how many veterans in each  
24 district, and accordingly-- and for medical needs and  
25 different things, and then we can find-- we can

2 strike a balance. Because at the end of the day we  
3 are here to address the inequities in our city, but  
4 evenly is not going to work for some of our district.  
5 That's all I want to highlight on that one.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Well, the  
7 good news is you're getting-- each of the Council  
8 Members is getting a breakdown of-- within their  
9 district how many veterans you have. So that's a  
10 good first step. Identifying the veterans, like the  
11 Commissioner always says--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]  
13 That's right.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: is the  
15 first step, and then this way each Council Member can  
16 see--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]  
18 And their needs.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: and where  
20 the VSO's are. Yes, yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: because some of  
22 them are more complex than others. Because I know  
23 some in the high--

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE:  
25 [interposing] We are.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah, the needs  
3 area, like myself, I know I'm going to have veterans  
4 that have a lot of issues that are home which I've  
5 been talking to some of them. When vets come--  
6 veterans come to your agency and needed medical  
7 attention, where do you send them? Do you send them  
8 to VA Hospital?

9 COMMISSIONER HENDON: It depends on the  
10 situation, Council Member Narcisse. So if someone--  
11 are we talking mental health first aid situation, or  
12 someone who has-- I just want to make sure I  
13 understand the type of--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]  
15 Medical.

16 COMMISSIONER HENDON: If they're eligible  
17 for VA healthcare, yes, but if it's something where  
18 they are not or they're not enrolled in the system,  
19 then that's the New York City Health + Hospitals.  
20 So, as far as-- yeah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. What do  
22 you think can be a road block right now for the  
23 veterans to get the services, the medical needs that  
24 they need?  
25

2 COMMISSIONER HENDON: I think a big piece  
3 of it is folks now knowing what benefits are  
4 available to them. That's the biggest issue. In  
5 that, you know, many of our veterans-- the VA doesn't  
6 market its services. So you have many of our people  
7 who deserve and have earned certain benefits that  
8 just don't know about them, and often times we have  
9 to wait for that veteran to reach out years after  
10 they should have gotten it, or it's a family member  
11 who reaches out to us. And so that's the key issue  
12 is that our folks don't know about them, Council  
13 Member Narcisse.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah, because I  
15 do believe that veterans should get everything they  
16 need because they earn it and they deserve it. One  
17 of the thing that I open up to you and I want to  
18 partner is to see more in the district, within the  
19 district to see more of partnership and collaboration  
20 to bring services, and-- because right now I have  
21 different agencies that coming in my district to  
22 offer a couple of hours within a week or a month. So  
23 veterans, we can reach out and send them emails so  
24 they can come to our offices, and then you know,  
25 explore the services. I started my whole-- you know,

2 I'm exploring. I'm doing the [inaudible] things,  
3 like to make sure that the veterans knows where to  
4 get services, whether it's immigration, whether it's  
5 housing, like they-- because sometimes they have  
6 immigration issue with their family or they sending  
7 for a wife or whatever the issue may be. I want to  
8 assure that they have the support. So, thank you,  
9 Chair. Appreciate it.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we got to  
11 keep it tight to three minutes each because they have  
12 to use this room. So, we have Council Member Brewer  
13 followed by Richardson Jordan.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very  
15 much. I appreciate the property tax exemption,  
16 because my husbands a vet, so Vietnam. So we  
17 definitely appreciate that. My question is on the  
18 homeless. I am fortunate to have with Harlem United  
19 and Bailey House 135, 140 permanent units for  
20 veterans, and I was the one that pulled that off with  
21 Steve Banks. But my question is what kind of dollars  
22 are associated with trying to get the veterans who  
23 are homeless homes? How much do they bring that's in  
24 addition to what somebody else who's homeless brings?  
25 And what dollars are associated if any trying to work

2 with the services so that when people come to New  
3 York and could be homeless, we could find homes for  
4 them before they end up in the shelter. That's been  
5 talked about forever. And so I am focused on trying  
6 to make sure we do not have homeless vets in our  
7 shelter system. That's my question.

8 COMMISSIONER HENDON: So, thank you so  
9 much for that, Council Member Brewer. It-- forgive  
10 me for not having the numbers in front of me right  
11 now, but it's just-- you know, our HUD Vash [sic]  
12 vouchers and what they pay out, that there's parity  
13 between what HUD Vash pays out and what CityPHEPS and  
14 other vouchers pay out. So that is there. So it's  
15 not something where one is less than the other. Also  
16 something for us, for a while we didn't have it. We  
17 have it now as far as being able to provide a unit  
18 hold for HUD vash. There was a time where we go to a  
19 landlord, and option one is to take something from  
20 CityPHEPS you got one month rent counted for. Option  
21 two is to take Vash and not have that. You no longer  
22 live in that place now. So thanks to Commissioner  
23 Jenkins and now Commissioner Park from DSS, we do  
24 have parity there. And like I said, forgive for not  
25 knowing the numbers off-hand, but it's really--

1  
2 there's parity between the HUD Vash program which we  
3 have strong control over, and the other voucher  
4 programs from the City. Forgive me for not having  
5 the larger numbers. When you speak to helping our  
6 veterans who may be in-bound, who may be housing  
7 insecure, the closest I can say is that anecdotally  
8 our housing team will get a contact where, you know,  
9 say someone for our team worked with someone. They  
10 had a good experience with her. She gets a call from  
11 someone saying hey, I'm coming from Texas, I'll see  
12 you soon. So and so told me to reach out to you. So  
13 we don't have anything where it's-- and it's ad-hoc  
14 as far as how this occurs. And what's tough for us  
15 with the Section 8 vouchers, were-- HUD Vash is like  
16 Section 8 but for veterans, just to put it out there.  
17 You have this requirement to be unsheltered for at  
18 least 90 days to qualify for the voucher.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Like everybody  
20 else.

21 COMMISSIONER HENDON: And so that's--  
22 yeah, so that's the-- that bedevils us for that as  
23 far as folks who are coming to New York City as being  
24 right to shelter, and for our brothers and sisters  
25 how are detained and incarcerated. Those are the



2 ones that we very much-- it's a challenge for us to  
3 help you get housing if technically HUD doesn't  
4 describe you as being homeless yet, but we all know  
5 as soon as you get out you're going to need a place  
6 to stay.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, so that's  
8 something for us to address. We have 90 days, we're  
9 trying to address it for everybody, because we don't  
10 believe in it, but particularly for veterans. That  
11 is an outrageous amount of time to have to wait, when  
12 particularly, if you threw that away that they do not  
13 end up on the shelter, but-- have you tried to come  
14 up with a more systemic discussion with the services  
15 as people are leaving the services? Or that's not--  
16 I know we've been trying for 20 years, but I just  
17 didn't know if that's had any traction.

18 COMMISSIONER HENDON: It's in progress,  
19 because of last fall we started to receive the  
20 contact for info for folks who are leaving military,  
21 so as far as those who are separating from the  
22 military who put on their D214 they're coming to New  
23 York, and so we do-- we're cultivating what it means  
24 to work with that group, and so we're going to have  
25 one of our largest-- well, our first major in-person

1 transition seminar at City Field on June 24<sup>th</sup>. It's  
2 about 3-5,000 people leave the military each year and  
3 come to New York City.  
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

6 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Out of the 200,000.  
7 And so we know who they are, and so we're working to  
8 put hands on them so they know what's available and  
9 take advantage.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then  
11 just finally, Veterans Court, I had a lot to do with  
12 making sure it exists. So my question is do you--  
13 you have funding in that terms of either peers or  
14 staffing, or is that just the state or somebody else,  
15 not veterans, not you?

16 COMMISSIONER HENDON: It's a state issue.  
17 So we maintain lines of communication with the  
18 different DA's, but as far as other aspects of  
19 funding, it's a state issue, and we've had a lot to  
20 do with helping making sure nonprofits exists now for  
21 those mentors who are part of the VTC program.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member  
24 Kristen Richardson Jordan followed by Paladino for  
25 final questions.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Hi,  
3 thank you for you info, the testimony here today. I  
4 wanted to ask, circling back to the budget of the  
5 \$80K that's for the consultants, the compensation for  
6 those outside professionals. And if I heard right it  
7 sounds like the new plan is to go with instead  
8 Americore. Can you tell us a bit more about that?  
9 Because presumably Americore could have been used  
10 previously, and it does seem like there's going to be  
11 a big difference in services.

12 COMMISSIONER HENDON: So, thank you so  
13 much for that question. For us, as far as the-- one  
14 example of something that went towards consultants,  
15 we've sent out the veteran community over a million  
16 meals as far as since July of 2020 through the  
17 present. It was a one million meal that was released  
18 out of working with the Campaign Against Hunger and  
19 Hello Fresh, and Black Better Social Justice as of  
20 last November. So we crossed the million meal mark.  
21 Every single Wednesday 8,000 meals are picked up by  
22 anywhere from 19 to 23 different veterans  
23 organizations. We had a consultant who helped us  
24 with that as far as, you know, herding the cats with  
25 that and making sure everything worked in its

1 appropriate place. That's an example of something  
2 where, you know, with New York Service-- you know, we  
3 had a sit-down with them to say hey, what can we do  
4 to work together, and said, look, it's a great  
5 program. And I'll take the blame for that, and I  
6 didn't know about the opportunity at time, Madam  
7 Council Member. So as soon as I found out, I said  
8 okay, let's apply for this so we can find a way to  
9 just be more efficient. So that was clearly on me  
10 not knowing about as far as folks to the left and  
11 right and partnerships. And we've worked to triage  
12 that, which is great for us right now.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN:

15 Okay. Well, I appreciate that humility, though. What  
16 you just described to me doesn't sound like something  
17 that an Americore-- that someone in Americore would  
18 have that level of experience and/or like expertise  
19 to necessarily coordinate. But I wanted to ask-- and  
20 Council Member Holden already touched on it, but just  
21 yes or no, if we wanted to do Veteran Resource  
22 Centers in each of our 51 Council Districts bi-  
23 weekly, would your agency have the ability to do  
24 that?

25 COMMISSIONER HENDON: No.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay,  
3 if we--

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE:  
5 [interposing] Not at our current size, yeah.

6 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Yeah, no.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: No,  
8 not currently. If we did-- if we wanted to do it  
9 monthly, would you have the ability to do that?  
10 Again, 51 Council Members.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: So, what's  
12 happening now and why it's been so successful, if a  
13 Council Member wants as like a pilot program to  
14 start, we've been working with each individual  
15 Council Member to send the staff out there and start  
16 this program up. If we wanted to expand that,  
17 because it's been so successful, we would definitely  
18 need the ability to hire additional staff to bring  
19 that maybe on a borough-wide, you know, approach with  
20 the Council Members and then down to the individual  
21 Council Members. But it's been tremendously  
22 successful, but at our current size, we wouldn't be  
23 able to go to each Council Member.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay,  
25 alright. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council  
3 Member Paladino for final question.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: And I get two  
5 minutes, that's it? Okay, here we go. First, \$5  
6 million dollar budget, that's it. Okay. I'm very  
7 curious. We dropped you down from \$80,000 to-- we  
8 reduced you by \$122,000 from the City. Then we  
9 reduced you again from the collective bargaining from  
10 \$80,000 Fiscal Year 23 to \$71,000. My question is,  
11 with 200,000 veterans that identify-- God knows  
12 there's a lot more than that out there. They're just  
13 not identifying. And me having a resource center  
14 that works, we clearly know that \$5 million dollars  
15 is not enough. How many claims were filed this past  
16 year, do we know?

17 COMMISSIONER HENDON: It was-- wait, let  
18 me make sure I've got the right number for you. I  
19 believe it's 205, but we're looking up-- it's 205,  
20 Council Member.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: So you had 205.  
22 Now out of my office alone, because you know how busy  
23 my office is, we file claims every other week.  
24 People come from all over the place. Five million  
25 dollars is not enough money for our veteran's

2 services. I'm sorry. It's unacceptable, and they  
3 need more money. I don't understand why the budget  
4 was cut. So I think that question isn't really for  
5 you guys. I think it's more for my colleagues here,  
6 because I don't understand it. We also talk about  
7 reaching out. We need to reach out. Now, at the  
8 last hearing that we had, if you remember I had  
9 mentioned about going-- having an advertising  
10 campaign for these young people, because you put a  
11 lousy \$19,800 because that's what the budget allowed  
12 for you to do for a media campaign on iHeartRadio. I  
13 think if we took a whole lot more money and put it  
14 out there so that our younger veterans or people who  
15 served-- because that's another thing. Veterans, you  
16 know, they get confused. The younger people don't  
17 understand that you served, you gave your time,  
18 whether it be in the state guard or whether it be in  
19 National Guard, Coast Guard, or whatever. They don't  
20 look at themselves as veterans necessarily. But I  
21 really think we need to increase your media coverage  
22 and get this going so that the message can get out  
23 there in the media that they look at, in the media  
24 that they watch, okay? They're what 50 years old, 45  
25 years old, 30 years old some of these guys and women.

2 They need to get what they're entitled to, but a  
3 lousy \$5 million dollars from the City of New York is  
4 a joke, an absolute joke.

5 [applause]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: So, I'd like to  
7 see more of these veterans services opened up  
8 throughout the district. They are a mainstay. They  
9 certainly have become a mainstay in my district and a  
10 helpful tool as you brought up, Paul, because it  
11 stops them from having to go down here to the City or  
12 to Borough Hall. But altogether, increase our budget  
13 and let us do what we need to do for the people who  
14 deserve it most, and that's the veterans who served,  
15 or the people who served this country in any way,  
16 shape, or form. Thank you very much.

17 [applause]

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Commissioner  
19 and your team, thank you all so much, and this was  
20 very helpful today, and we look forward to partnering  
21 with you in the next budget. Thank you so much.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VALLONE: Thank you,  
23 Chairs. Thank you Council.

24 COMMISSIONER HENDON: Thank you. Thank  
25 you, Chairs.



2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, with that,  
4 today's Executive Budget hearing is adjourned.

5 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE WITH COMMITTEE ON  
GENERAL WELFARE AND COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE WITH COMMITTEE ON  
GENERAL WELFARE AND COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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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 May 24, 2023