

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS

jointly with the

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
INVESTIGATIONS

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Julie Won, Chairperson  
Gale A. Brewer, Chairperson

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- Joann Ariola
- Alexa Avilés
- Diana Ayala
- James F. Gennaro
- Shahana Hanif
- Rita C. Joseph
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- Althea Stevens
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- Inna Vernikov
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Molly Wasow Park  
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and Development

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Zachary Iscol  
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Chris Blanco  
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Theodore Long, MD  
Senior Vice President, Population Health  
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Brad Lander  
Comptroller  
Office of the New York City Comptroller

Emily Alexiou  
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Christopher Leon Johnson  
Citizen of New York

Raul Rivera  
Citizen of New York

Alana Tornello  
Human Services Council

1 COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS jointly with the  
2 COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

4

3 Good afternoon and welcome to today's New York  
4 City Council joint hearing for the Committees on  
5 Oversight and Investigation and Contracts. At this  
6 time we ask you to silence all cell phones and  
7 electronic devices to minimize disruptions throughout  
8 the hearing. If you have testimony you wish to  
9 submit for the record you may do so via email at  
10 testimony@counsel.nyc.gov. Once again that is  
11 testimony@counsel.nyc.gov. At any time throughout  
12 the hearing, please do not approach the dais. We  
13 thank you for your cooperation. Chairs, we are ready  
14 to begin.

15 Good afternoon and welcome. Thank you so much  
16 for attending this very important oversight hearing.  
17 My name is Julie Won and I have the privilege of  
18 chairing the New York City Council's Committee on  
19 Contracts. And I would like to take a moment to  
20 thank my co-chair, Councilmember Gale Brewer, the  
21 Chair of Oversight and Investigations Committee, and  
22 the members of both committees for coming together to  
23 hold this hearing.

24 Today we'll be delving into the city's  
25 contracting response to provide services for more

3 than 110,000 asylum seekers who have arrived in New  
4 York City over this past year for the last 18 months.

5 Providing shelter food, health care, education,  
6 legal services, and more to this vulnerable  
7 population has been an immense undertaking for our  
8 city. It could not have happened without the  
9 incredible work of both our dedicated city agencies,  
10 nonprofit service providers, and vendors. But at the  
11 same time rapidly-arranged emergency contracting at  
12 the scale necessary to appropriately respond to the  
13 influx of people over this past year inevitably  
14 raises risks of waste, inefficiencies, and even fraud  
15 if not managed carefully. Stories have emerged of  
16 unsafe and unsanitary conditions at several  
17 humanitarian relief facilities, and the city  
18 comptroller's office found it necessary to audit  
19 emergency contracts relating to this crisis.

20 What the comptroller found was a lack of  
21 oversight and accountability around procurement  
22 relating to this crisis, including inadequate  
23 performance standards and monitoring of contractor  
24 operations. As the Council's oversight and  
25 accountability entities for contracts and the  
execution of the provision of services related to

3 city contracts our two committees aim to ensure  
4 taxpayer dollars are utilized responsibly and  
5 effectively.

6 Today, we aim to explore both how city taxpayer  
7 dollars are being spent, and if services are being  
8 provided in a way that best serves both the needs of  
9 newly arrived asylum seekers as well as the tens and  
10 thousands of asylum seekers who are currently in the  
11 City's Care.

12 Today, we will also examine how city agencies  
13 selected and managed vendors during this crisis. We  
14 want to better understand how certain contracts were  
15 procured, what efforts have been made to contain  
16 costs, and what has been done to ensure contractor  
17 accountability has been maintained. In particular,  
18 we will focus today on emergency procurement  
19 practices and a timeline of transitioning back to  
20 standard competitive processes. We will examine how  
21 certain vendors were vetted and selected, what  
22 protocols are in place to make sure vendors can  
23 actually perform their contractual obligations, and  
24 how agencies can improve their oversight mechanisms  
25 to prevent waste. This hearing builds upon the  
council's longstanding efforts to bring greater

3 transparency, efficiency and integrity to our city's  
4 contracting process. We look forward to engaging  
5 with a number of contracting agencies on these  
6 important investigative issues and oversight issues.

7 Today we hope to hear from New York City's  
8 Emergency Management, New York City Health +  
9 Hospitals, Department of Social Services, the Mayor's  
10 Office of Contracting Services, the Department of  
11 Citywide Administrative Services, and we all have  
12 questions for each and every one of them.

13 As our city faces a looming 15% budget cut it  
14 it's going to be extremely important that we have a  
15 clear answer of what the \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion  
16 will be for the \$12 billion estimated costs for  
17 migrants which will we'll delve into.

18 Before we begin I would like to take a moment to  
19 thank the Contracts Committee, Senior Counsel Alex  
20 Paulenoff, Policy Analysts, Alex Yablon, and  
21 Financial Analysts Florentine Cabor, as well as the  
22 Investigative Committee Staff, Aaron Mendelsohn,  
23 Nicole Cata, Megan Powers, Zachary Meher, Kevin  
24 Frick, and Katie Sinise from the Council's oversight  
25 Investigations Division for all their hard work on  
this hearing.

2 With that said, I would like to acknowledge the  
3 council members that are here today: Councilmember  
4 Schulman, Councilmember Holden, and Councilmember  
5 Nurse. And now chair Brewer will deliver her opening  
6 remarks.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much Chair  
8 Won. I'm Gale Brewer. I'm Chair of the Council  
9 Committee on Oversight and Investigations. I too  
10 want to welcome my colleagues, the Administration,  
11 advocates and everyone to today's hearing on city  
12 contracts serving the growing number of asylum  
13 seekers in our city. Obviously New York's-- one of  
14 New York's proudest legacies is serving as a beacon  
15 of hope and a symbol of opportunity to people around  
16 the globe. We have always welcomed newcomers, and we  
17 always will. But we know we are strained in our  
18 capacity to meet the needs of the current influx of  
19 more than 100,000 asylum seekers. We are fortunate  
20 to have numerous young families with children. They  
21 are people deeply traumatized by experiences in their  
22 countries of origin and along the way to the United  
23 States, and adults who are prohibited by federal  
24 immigration law from working without a permit  
25



3 (although I understand thanks to many individuals,  
4 that might change in terms of the Venezuelans)

5 To provide asylum seekers with housing, food and  
6 services ranging from counseling to legal help, the  
7 city has turned to an array of outside contractors  
8 for-profits and nonprofits. The firm's have quickly  
9 gotten huge payouts under looser emergency  
10 contracting procedures to stand up an entire  
11 ecosystem of facilities and services. However, we  
12 keep hearing disturbing reports in the news, from our  
13 constituents, and from oversight officials like the  
14 Comptroller and the IBO that suggests some of these  
15 contractors are abusing the city's trust. We've  
16 heard allegations of sexual harassment in shelters.  
17 I know that some of the oversight of security guards  
18 has been laxed because they have been getting high on  
19 the job. And numerous individuals on contractors'  
20 payrolls who don't seem to have enough to do. We are  
21 very concerned about the CEO of DocGo has confirmed  
22 that they have got a nearly-half-billion dollar no-  
23 bid contract to provide various services to asylum  
24 seekers, despite having no such experience. They're  
25 focused on health care primarily. And the CEO was  
forced to resign after he fabricated his credentials.

1 I have no problem not having a college degree, but  
2 just be honest about it.

3  
4 Simultaneously, Comptroller Brad Lander found  
5 numerous troubling issues with the contract itself.  
6 He'll be testifying later. And it only continues  
7 against his recommendation. We understand that in  
8 emergencies, sometimes being expeditious takes  
9 precedence over dotting every T and crossing every I-  
10 - dotting every I and crossing every T, but not when  
11 public money is at stake, in my opinion. At a time  
12 when administration has called for stark budget cuts  
13 across agencies to pay for such massive contracts, we  
14 really want to understand whether these sacrifices  
15 are demanded in good faith.

16 Why has the Administration given such enormous  
17 contracts to firms with the experience that is not  
18 relevant to the job? And of course, you really can't  
19 lie about your credentials. What safeguards are in  
20 place to make sure contractors actually deliver  
21 quality services? What's the oversight? And with  
22 this stream of new arrival showing no signs of  
23 stopping, at what point do we stop treating this as a  
24 temporary emergency and contracting under looser  
25 emergency rules?

2 I just want to say I know that there is always a  
3 lot of attempt at oversight, but just this week,  
4 going into one of the SRO shelters in my district  
5 with migrants, we found out that for two months,  
6 there were no diapers, no wipes, and no baby formula.  
7 And after we brought it to the attention of the city,  
8 they are getting them today. But that's not good  
9 oversight.

10 I do want to thank the Oversight and  
11 Investigation staff, Legislative Counsel Nicole  
12 Qatal, Policy Analyst Alex Blonde, and O and I staff  
13 Director Aaron Mendelsohn, Deputy Director Powers  
14 counsel Kevin Frick, Lead Investigator Zak Mayer, and  
15 Investigator Kerry's Sinise, and on my staff, Sam  
16 Goldsmith. Thank you very much. Go ahead, Madam  
17 Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON WON: Who's swearing in?

19 COUNSEL: Senior Counsel Alex Falinov. Will all  
20 members the Administration please raise your right  
21 hands.

22 Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the  
23 whole truth and nothing but the truth and your  
24 testimony today and to respond honestly to council  
25 member questions.

1 COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS jointly with the  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS 12

2 ALL: I do.

3 COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin when ready.

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Good afternoon. I want to  
5 thank the City Council's Committee on Contracts, the  
6 Committee on Oversight and Investigations, Chair Won,  
7 Chair Brewer, and the committee members for  
8 organizing today's hearing on city contracts serving  
9 asylum seekers.

10 My name is Molly Wasow Park, and I serve as the  
11 Commissioner for the Department of Social Services,  
12 which is made up of the Human Resources  
13 Administration and the Department of Homeless  
14 Services. I'm pleased to join my colleagues,  
15 Commissioner of New York City Emergency Management  
16 Zach Iscol, Chief of Staff and Deputy Commissioner  
17 for External Affairs of the Department of Housing,  
18 Preservation, and Development, George Sarkessian, and  
19 Senior Vice President of Ambulatory Care and  
20 Population Health New York City Health + Hospitals,  
21 Dr. Theodore Long.

22 The New York City Department of Social Services  
23 is the nation's largest social services agency. Each  
24 year we assist more than 3 million New Yorkers,  
25 advancing a mission of fighting poverty and income

1 inequality. I appreciate the opportunity to review  
2 with you one critical aspect of our work, which is  
3 contracting with vendors and providers.  
4

5 Contracts allow us to mobilize the resources in  
6 our communities to deliver services and support to  
7 asylum seekers. The contracting process is governed  
8 by a myriad of laws, regulations, and executive  
9 orders from the federal, state, and local levels.

10 While we will only have the opportunity to review  
11 parts of a larger contracting process that spans  
12 volumes, I want to assure you that we are mindful of  
13 the meaningful difference the supports we provide  
14 make in the New Yorkers' lives. We bring that sense  
15 of responsibility to each part of the contracting  
16 process.

17 Amongst its purposes, the procurement policy  
18 board roles direct us to provide for increased public  
19 confidence in New York City's public procurement  
20 processes; ensure the fair and equitable treatment of  
21 all persons who deal with the procurement system of  
22 the city of New York; provide for increased  
23 efficiency, economy, and flexibility in city  
24 purchasing activities, and to maximize to the fullest  
25 extent of the purchasing power of the city; foster

1 effective open competition to the extent possible  
2 from all segments of the vendor community, including  
3 small businesses and minority and women-owned-and-  
4 operated enterprises; safeguard the integrity of the  
5 procurement system and protect against corruption,  
6 waste, fraud, and abuse; ensure appropriate public  
7 access to contracting information; and foster equal  
8 employment opportunities in the policies and  
9 practices of contractors and subcontractors wishing  
10 to do business with the city. Our team of  
11 contracting officers and procurement professionals  
12 work to make those directives a reality.  
13

14 In August of 2022, we issued the emergency  
15 solicitation for the DHS city sanctuary facilities,  
16 the document requesting proposals to serve the  
17 emergency needs of asylum seekers. In that  
18 solicitation, we sought vendors to procure and  
19 operate sites to serve families with children, adult  
20 families, or single adults. This is an open-ended  
21 solicitation, meaning proposals are reviewed on an  
22 ongoing basis and we began accepting proposals  
23 immediately. The solicitation is still open and we  
24 are still receiving proposals. Note that this  
25 solicitation by no means constitutes the totality of

1  
2 our response to DSS, or our response as city, which  
3 has included all the tools in our procurement  
4 toolbox. However, it does provide an important  
5 window into our approach to emergency procurement.

6 This emergency solicitation was issued pursuant  
7 to our declaration of emergency for asylees services  
8 in shelter, an emergency procurement declaration to  
9 rapidly procure shelter and other services for people  
10 seeking asylum in New York City. Comptroller Lander  
11 then worked closely with the Administration to  
12 appropriately expedite contracts and ensure New York  
13 City can deliver shelter and services that families  
14 seeking asylum here urgently need. The emergency  
15 declaration sets forth the framework we operate under  
16 given the urgent needs we face.

17 After issuing the solicitation in August 2022, we  
18 held an information session to answer questions from  
19 interested providers. Subsequently, both new and  
20 existing providers have submitted proposals to  
21 operate emergency facilities. Proposals are reviewed  
22 by at least three raters who assess proposals on  
23 multiple metrics including experience, organizational  
24 capacity, and approach. After assessing the scores  
25 in that rating process, we decline proposals below a

1  
2 certain threshold. Where possible we offer  
3 constructive feedback to those proposals we decline.

4 For proposals above the rating threshold, the  
5 city enters into contract negotiations, which  
6 simultaneously confirm whether the proposer has the  
7 capacity to enter into a provider agreement. The  
8 process includes negotiating a budget, and outlining  
9 parameters on city requirements for staffing and  
10 services. We undertake these negotiations with a  
11 model budget we use as a guidepost to ensure the City  
12 receives appropriate value per contract. In  
13 analyzing negotiation outcomes, however, it is  
14 important to keep in mind that in an emergency  
15 context, some costs are more expensive relative to  
16 non-emergency procurement where we have months of  
17 lead time for planning and scoping. Even given the  
18 emergency context these methodical steps exemplify  
19 the thoughtfulness and care with which we proceed in  
20 emergency procurement.

21 There are many further aspects to contracting in  
22 general and emergency procurement in particular that  
23 are not easily summarized, from the activation of  
24 existing contracts to deliver services to the ongoing  
25 assessment and evaluation of contract performance, to



1 the checks and balances provided by the Law  
2 Department, the Office of Management and Budget, the  
3 Office of the Comptroller, and the City Council.  
4

5 More than 116,000 asylum seekers have come  
6 through New York City's intake system since the  
7 spring of 2022. We have over 60,400 asylum seekers  
8 currently in the city's care. The City has opened  
9 210 sites including 17 large-scale humanitarian  
10 relief centers. As New Yorkers, we mobilized.

11 Community based organizations, houses of worship,  
12 volunteers and public servants have all participated  
13 in answering the call to feed, clothe, and house  
14 asylum seekers in our city.

15 Human Service Providers stepped up bringing to  
16 bear their considerable experience in delivering care  
17 for New Yorkers. Our human service partners continue  
18 to help us care for our communities of new New  
19 Yorkers. As city leaders, we utilized every tool in  
20 our toolbox to help meet moral obligations including  
21 emergency contracting and procurement. Using these  
22 tools, we at DSS and DHS opened emergency shelters in  
23 all five boroughs serving families with children,  
24 single adults, and adult families.

1  
2           The city continues to receive thousands of new  
3 arrivals a week seeking shelter and support and we  
4 have worked tirelessly to live up to our obligation  
5 to provide help.

6           I would like to take a moment to recognize the  
7 truly amazing work of colleagues at DSS, at our  
8 sister agencies and across the broad network of  
9 providers and not-for-profit partners engaged in  
10 meeting these challenges on a daily basis. The care  
11 and compassion that have guided our response thus far  
12 will continue to carry us through our response to  
13 these unprecedented circumstances.

14           Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.  
15 I'd now like to turn it over to my colleague from HPD  
16 to give his testimony.

17           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Thank you,  
18 Commissioner Park. Good afternoon, Chair Brewer,  
19 Chair Won, and members of the Committee on Oversight  
20 and Investigations and Committee on Contracts. My  
21 name is George Sarkissian. I'm the Chief of Staff  
22 and Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs at the  
23 New York City Department of Housing Preservation and  
24 Development. Thank you for the opportunity to be  
25 here and discuss HPD's work serving asylum seekers.

1  
2 For almost a year, the Department of Housing  
3 Preservation and Development has joined the multi-  
4 agency effort to shelter and care for thousands of  
5 asylum seekers arriving in New York City every week.  
6 As the number of new arrivals increased since April  
7 2022, the City's response group proportionately.

8 Joining the Department of Social Services, New York  
9 City Health + Hospitals, and New York City Emergency  
10 Management, as well as several other agencies that  
11 provide support services, HPD has worked hard to meet  
12 the challenge head on.

13 As an agency that already provide shelter to New  
14 Yorkers displaced from their homes because of fires  
15 and other emergencies, HPD has core competencies  
16 we've built upon. As many of you know when a fire  
17 leads to a vacate order of a residential building for  
18 unlivable conditions, the American Red Cross,  
19 contracted by HPD, provides immediate short-term  
20 shelter in nearby hotels. Households that need  
21 longer term shelter as they wait for their homes to  
22 be repaired then are moved into HPDs emergency  
23 shelter system.

24 In addition to our existing emergency services  
25 staff, we've pulled in staff from various parts of

1  
2 our agency, including budget, legal, and the  
3 commissioner's office, all doing double duty,  
4 addressing the housing crisis in New York City and  
5 the needs of asylum seekers arriving in New York  
6 City. The same values that drive us to help the most  
7 vulnerable New Yorkers find affordable and safe  
8 housing drive us to help asylum seekers who are  
9 looking for shelter and stability.

10 In an environment of limited resources. We all  
11 must work harder to meet the needs of the people we  
12 serve.

13 This is true of all the agencies and partners  
14 sitting here with me today and so many more. In  
15 total, our city has spent \$2.08 billion through the  
16 end of August 2023 on asylum seekers. Our city  
17 agencies have budgeted \$2.9 billion for fiscal year  
18 24 and have spent \$637 million in July and August to  
19 serve asylum seekers, providing shelter meals and  
20 support services to the migrants seeking safety and  
21 their own American dream.

22 To give an overview of HPD's involvement in the  
23 crisis, currently HPD is serving approximately 5000  
24 asylum seekers in our shelters. Today we have over  
25 2300 individuals in our Downstate hotels, 1900

2 individuals in our upstate hotels, and will soon have  
3 approximately 1600 men in our humanitarian emergency  
4 response and relief centers, also known as HERRCs,  
5 and houses of worship sites in New York City.

6 Last fiscal year HPD spent approximately \$33  
7 million on asylum seeker initiatives, and for the  
8 current fiscal year to date we've already incurred  
9 about \$80 million in expenses through the end of  
10 August.

11 Now I'd like to take the opportunity to discuss  
12 our different locations and services our agency has  
13 been able to provide asylum seekers.

14 HPD's first shelter serving asylum seekers opened  
15 this past spring in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The  
16 Jefferson, a HERRC that is currently serving  
17 approximately 532 asylum seekers, is a commercial  
18 building which has been converted into a congregate  
19 shelter. We are grateful for the Department of  
20 Design and Construction for managing the design and  
21 construction needed to convert the building into a  
22 shelter, and grateful to H+H for helping train our  
23 staff on how to stand up and manage operations. We  
24 have built a partnership with the local community in  
25 Bushwick, and are particularly grateful to

Councilmember Jennifer Gutiérrez for her leadership  
and her genuine efforts to assist our asylum seekers.

On June 5, the Mayor announced a partnership with  
faith leaders to launch a faith-based shelter  
program. This is another opportunity for HPD to  
support the city and the asylum seekers who are  
coming here. Partnering with the New York Disaster  
Interfaith Service, also known as NYDIS, the program  
makes houses of worship available to asylum seekers  
for shelter. Faith-based organizations across the  
city have stepped up to respond to the needs of  
asylum seekers, many of them serving the material  
needs directly, but many of them also offering space  
for congregate shelter.

Partnering with the Department of Buildings and  
the FDNY, HPD and NIDIS have been working with houses  
of worship to ensure available space is made safe for  
asylum seekers.

Our first two houses of worship opened in  
September: the greater Immanuel Baptist Church and  
Christ's Disciples, both in the Bronx. We have  
several other interested houses of worship that we're  
currently working with, with plans to provide shelter  
for asylum seekers through the NIDIS program.

1  
2       In addition to our shelters in New York City, HPD  
3 operates shelters in various locations throughout New  
4 York State. Due to the overwhelming need and short  
5 supply of space, something we see in the housing  
6 crisis more generally, the city decided to open up  
7 shelters upstate as part of our ongoing decompression  
8 strategy. As hotels are filled up in New York City,  
9 and costs for hotel rooms continued to increase  
10 because of limited supply, we decided to alleviate  
11 some of this pressure by transporting asylum seekers  
12 that volunteer to leave the city for Upstate hotels.  
13 HPD contracted with DocGo to operate Upstate shelters  
14 and services provided in our upstate shelters are the  
15 same as those provided here in our HERRCs, which  
16 includes shelter, food, laundry services, access to  
17 case management, and social work.

18       As we began to open sites in spring 2023, it  
19 became clear that several counties, cities, and towns  
20 would not welcome our asylum seekers. Xenophobic  
21 rhetoric from some elected officials combined with  
22 emergency declarations, and temporary restraining  
23 orders prohibiting the city from using local hotels  
24 have been challenging. However, working with city  
25 partners in government affairs and outreach, we

3 continue to engage local communities in places like  
4 Albany County, Erie County where Buffalo is located,  
5 Monroe County where Rochester is located. We've  
6 developed meaningful partnerships with county  
7 executives, city mayors, school districts and local  
8 CBOs to ensure our asylum seekers have an opportunity  
9 to integrate into local communities. Our  
10 partnerships with these local officials and CBOs are  
11 ongoing, including regular meetings to coordinate  
12 operations and work out any issues that arise  
13 together.

14 DocGo is currently operating 13 hotels upstate  
15 and 15 hotels here in New York City for HPD.  
16 Whenever possible, DocGo has subcontracted with local  
17 CBOs to write case management services, as they know  
18 their communities best and are able to make referrals  
19 as needed. DocGo has also worked to identify local  
20 vendors for all the other services including food,  
21 laundry, and security.

22 Over the past several months as we've expanded  
23 our hotel shelter system, HPD has been required to  
24 respond quickly to the needs of the families arriving  
25 at the arrival center. Every day, hundreds of new  
asylum seekers arrive here, which requires the city



1 to quickly mobilize and add capacity when it becomes  
2 critically short. In these moments, standing up  
3 operation safely at a new hotel is always the first  
4 priority to ensure our newest New Yorkers are not  
5 sleeping on our streets. That has been the focus of  
6 our work and our contract with DocGo. But as our  
7 shelter system quickly increased in size and  
8 geography, it is also vital to focus our energy and  
9 capacity on operations and oversight of our upstate  
10 hotels, and the needs of the asylum seekers in our  
11 care. We have a network of partners we've relied  
12 upon and worked with closely to provide additional  
13 visibility into the operations of our upstate hotels,  
14 in addition to our contracting oversight. The New  
15 York Immigration Coalition and their network has  
16 developed a relationship with most of our Upstate  
17 hotels and the asylum seekers in our care. They have  
18 been key partner in all our Upstate locations,  
19 especially in communities where we've experienced  
20 some of the xenophobia, and their network partners  
21 have helped us make sure our asylum seekers are  
22 welcomed with love and compassion.  
23

24 In addition to the New York Immigration  
25 Coalition, the New York State Office of Temporary and

1  
2 Disability assistance, and the New York Legal Aid  
3 Society have visited our Upstate and Downstate hotels  
4 operated by DocGo, and it provided helpful feedback  
5 that we've used to improve operations. It's  
6 important to note that both OTDA and Legal Aid have  
7 provided mostly positive reports about the operations  
8 of our Upstate hotels. We appreciate their  
9 constructive feedback and know we can always do  
10 better.

11 We also recognize that the speed and scope of  
12 this work as we stand up new sites will require  
13 constant learning and responding to new challenges.  
14 We take this incredibly seriously. HPD has been  
15 responsive to reports regarding subcontractors in our  
16 Upstate hotels, and have also been working closely  
17 with DocGo to ensure subcontractors are performing  
18 well. For example, when we receive complaints that  
19 the food in our Albany hotels was not culturally  
20 appropriate, Dotco selected several new potential  
21 vendors and allowed asylum seekers to sample the food  
22 before choosing a new vendor.

23 HPD recently opened our second HERC on Austell  
24 Place in Long Island City. With a capacity of almost  
25 900 adults, Austell Place is an office building that

1 was converted into congregate shelter that opened  
2 earlier this month. DocGo was selected as a vendor  
3 to operate the shelter. I want to thank Chair Won  
4 for her interest in Austell Place, and the welfare of  
5 asylum seekers in our care.  
6

7 Moving forward HPD and our colleagues at NYCEM,  
8 H+H, and DHS will continue to work hard to serve the  
9 asylum seekers in our care. We're always looking for  
10 opportunities to improve and move towards a steady  
11 state of operations.

12 HPD has a new team with dedicated staff to serve  
13 asylum seekers. This new unit will allow HPD to  
14 focus on adding shelter capacity and give us greater  
15 visibility into our shelter operations. We thank the  
16 City Council for the opportunity to testify and are  
17 grateful for your continued commitment to support and  
18 care the growing migrant population, and look forward  
19 to working together on this whole society effort.

20 We're here to answer any questions you may have.

21 CHAIRPERSON WON: I would like to acknowledge  
22 Councilmember Yeger, Councilmember Vernikov,  
23 Councilmember Joseph, Councilmember Lee,  
24 Councilmember Williams and Councilmember Hanif for  
25 joining us.

1  
2 Before we start our questioning, I would like to  
3 acknowledge that, as you may know, we have invited  
4 seven executives of companies with key city contracts  
5 involving asylum seekers to testify today at the  
6 council hearing, and not a single one of them have  
7 chosen to appear. In fact, we understand that the  
8 Administration directed them to not appear, and this  
9 is a violation of what the charter states. In  
10 Section 29 of the City Charter it grants the power of  
11 investigation oversight to the Council, which may  
12 investigate any matters within its jurisdiction  
13 relating to the property, affairs, or government of  
14 the city, or in any county within the city. As well,  
15 any standing or special committee shall have the  
16 power to require the attendance, and examine, and  
17 take testimony under oath of such persons that it  
18 deems necessary to require the production of books,  
19 accounts, papers, and other evidence related to the  
20 inquiry, as well as section 30 of the Charter, which  
21 gives us the authority to review and investigate  
22 contractual spending by city agencies.

23 I'm going to name the ones that were invited that  
24 have chosen not to appear: Anthony Capone of DocGo,  
25 the former CEO, and since DocGo's resignation due to

1 fraudulent fabrication of his of his resume. We've  
2 also invited Aaron Weiner, the Chief Information  
3 Officer of DocGo to testify, and the total value of  
4 DocGo was contract with the city as \$432 million.  
5

6 Second, we invited William Sullivan of SLSCo the  
7 total value of SLSCo's contract within the city is  
8 \$135 million.

9 Third, we invited A.J. Caro of Arrow Security,  
10 which has been under a lot of scrutiny, as you heard  
11 from councilmember Brewer. The total value of Arrow  
12 Security's contract with the city is \$140 million.

13 Fourth, we invited Martin Cukier of Executive  
14 Medical Services. The total value of Executive  
15 Medical Services' contract with the city is \$219  
16 million.

17 Fifth we invited Vijay Dandapani of HANYC  
18 Foundation. The total value of HANYC's contractual  
19 agreement the city is \$237 million and now totaling  
20 with its renewal for 2026, one over \$1 billion.

21 Lastly, we also invited Matt Jozwiak of Rethink  
22 Food New York City the total value of rethink foods  
23 contract with the city as \$87,800,000.

24 Had any of them appeared we would have asked them  
25 the following questions, among others: First, we

1 would have asked them how did they procure their  
2 asylum seeking contracts with the city? Was there a  
3 bidding process for their contracts? What is the  
4 total value of their contracts? And how do they  
5 justify it? How much it has been paid to date? How  
6 much are they still owed still by the city? And have  
7 there been any complaints or other issues related to  
8 their performance of their contracts? How if at all,  
9 have they addressed these issues? And others. But  
10 because however not a single one of them have  
11 appeared to testify, these seven executives did not  
12 have the courage and respect to the City Council as  
13 well as the people of New York City to testify before  
14 us today. And we were unable to ask these questions.  
15 We'll leave it to the Administration, the press and  
16 the public to continue to ask these questions about  
17 these companies and these vendors about their  
18 contracts with the city in order to ensure that our  
19 city is spending its money wisely, with reputable  
20 companies and with its best interest of the people in  
21 New York City with the 115,000 asylum seekers that  
22 we're seeking to serve and protect.

24 We will begin our questioning for the  
25 Administration.

1  
2 I also want to acknowledge Councilmember  
3 Salamanca as well as Councilmember Gennaro for  
4 joining us as well.

5 On June 29, 2022, Mayor Adams declared the need  
6 for emergency procurement under Section 315 of the  
7 New York City charter and Section 306 of the  
8 Procurement Policy Board rules to address the migrant  
9 crisis. Now 18 months later, it's been over a year,  
10 why is the regular arrival of asylum seekers to New  
11 York City still deemed an unforeseen occurrence  
12 qualifying for emergency procurement, where we just  
13 heard our deputy commissioner of HPD state how the  
14 hotels have filled up. There is clearly a  
15 predictable cost now where we can see the trends in  
16 the data from the last 18 months to understand that  
17 it is no longer unforeseeable, but they are seeable.

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Councilmember.  
19 I'll start, and my colleagues will certainly chime  
20 in.

21 This has been an immensely challenging 18 months  
22 for the administration. We have seen essentially a  
23 doubling of the number of people experiencing  
24 homelessness in the city. So you know, a trend that-  
25 - that grew up over 40 years, we've doubled it in 18

1 months. It has actually been-- We've seen multiple  
2 waves, so you know, peaks and then-- then incoming,  
3 slowed down, it's gone back up. So there, there has  
4 been a lot of unpredictability.  
5

6 What I can say is that within the Department of  
7 Homeless Services, when we do a standard shelter, it  
8 is typically, you know, year to two years from the  
9 point at which we identify a site until that site is  
10 ready to open.

11 There's very few buildings that are off-the-shelf  
12 homeless shelters, right? So we're doing  
13 construction. We're doing other kinds of work. The  
14 hotels that we're using now are because they are  
15 suitable for residential purposes in very short  
16 periods of time.

17 So I would say we are looking at ways that we can  
18 both accommodate the-- the influx of people that are  
19 coming in, while also transitioning to longer term  
20 operations. But understanding that-- that isn't--  
21 given the nature of the procurement process, the  
22 nature of construction in the city, it is something  
23 that will take time.

24 CHAIRPERSON WON: With housing, rents, and other  
25 initial outfitting, as you mentioned, being the



3 majority of the actual spending type for asylum  
4 seekers response, if hotels are filled up, and we  
5 know that we will continue to renew these hotel  
6 contracts, is it's still unforeseeable for you?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: So DHS is in the process of  
8 renewing a number of its emergency contracts. And I  
9 do want to emphasize our sites were all-- were all  
10 procured competitively, right? We did have an RFP.  
11 We put out and went through a fairly standard  
12 competition process for-- to identify providers, to  
13 identify sites. We are renewing those sites for-- at  
14 this point, we're doing three year contracts on the  
15 assumption that it will take us some time to  
16 transition to alternative locations, to alternative  
17 structures. The goal is not to continue to use  
18 hotels for long term. DHS has hotels that have been  
19 a part of the DHS response to homelessness on and off  
20 for-- for many years now. We've been very public  
21 about the fact that, particularly for families with  
22 children, we don't think hotels are the right  
23 response. We had-- we were very pleased at the end  
24 of calendar year 21, we had gotten all the families  
25 with children out of hotels, when we-- and very  
shortly after, we saw this influx of asylum seekers

1 starting and we needed to revisit hotels. But we  
2 recognize that it is not the long term-plan and we  
3 are working on strategies to transition to  
4 alternative forms of shelter.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON WON: So in your view, when is it no  
7 longer an unforeseeable occurrence for emergency  
8 procurement?

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: We are we are managing  
10 through the steady increase of-- well, I shouldn't  
11 say steady, actually-- fluctuating increase in  
12 population. We continue-- We need to continue to  
13 respond in real time. At the same time, we are  
14 doubling down and planning for long term strategies.  
15 But those long term strategies won't be in place  
16 overnight.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: If I may, do you  
18 mind if I just add to that?

19 I think there's a fundamental misunderstanding  
20 here by the Council in terms of what we're doing with  
21 contracting. So, Charles, what do we have? Like  
22 about 200 contracts that we're leveraging overall?  
23 So, we have about 200 contracts that we're using for  
24 this process.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: When you say "we", you're  
3 talking about your agency?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: I'm talking  
5 about the City.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The City.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: The folks  
8 represented up here. My agency, we have about 17 or  
9 18 contracts total. The vast majority of those  
10 contracts are not emergency contracts. I think we  
11 need to be clear about that. Most of the contracts  
12 that we're leveraging are competitively bid  
13 contracts, things that were put out for RFP, things  
14 that are requirements contracts. And a lot of the  
15 times what we are doing now is displacing some of the  
16 emergency contracts, because we have been in for this  
17 for so long. So I think the emphasis on what is  
18 foreseen and not unforeseen, it's a little bit of-- I  
19 think unfair, because this is also an unprecedented  
20 emergency in which it is very hard to predict what  
21 the future is going to be, what the needs are going  
22 to be. We had to shift our focus pretty  
23 significantly back in May, with the opening of  
24 Respite Centers. There's continuing to be things  
25

1  
2 that we need to adjust to that require new emergency  
3 procurements.

4 But I think it's also important to remember that  
5 just because it's an emergency procurement doesn't  
6 mean we are not following certain rules, procedures,  
7 and regulations to make sure that we are sticking to  
8 the letter of the law and the charter, and that we're  
9 doing things right. It is just simply a faster  
10 process. Some of the things that we're talking  
11 about, for example, like, if we were looking at a  
12 human services RFP. I mean, Molly, what would that  
13 take? Eighteen months? Two years?

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yeah. About that.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Right? And so I  
16 think they're-- the emergency processes, it's not  
17 like we're just showing up with a bag of cash and  
18 handling it to somebody. There are still procedures  
19 that are being followed, to make sure that we have a  
20 competitive process, to make sure that we are  
21 managing the vendors appropriately, and we're happy  
22 to talk more about what that process is that's  
23 outlined in the charter.

24 CHAIRPERSON WON: We definitely want to talk more  
25 about it in this hearing, because according to the

2 Oversight Investigation Committee's examination, 196  
3 contracts that were examined for asylum seeker  
4 spending, only three were procured through  
5 competitive bidding. So it seems like we have very  
6 contradictory data on how the competitive bidding has  
7 been taking place through-- for the asylum seekers.

8 My next question is what is your-- So what is  
9 the actual plan for the Mayoral Administration for  
10 transitioning to nonemergency procurement, and what  
11 is your timeline?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: I'm sorry. I  
13 think-- [TO COMMISSIONER PARK:] Do you want to  
14 clarify that? [TO COUNCIL:] Yeah, I think you're  
15 you're misunderstanding the-- the definition of some  
16 of the contracts with that. But I'll turn it over to  
17 Charles.

18 MR. DIAMOND: Thank you, Councilmembers. Just to  
19 be clear, when we're talking about competitiveness,  
20 as as the Commissioner was just saying, emergency  
21 contracts are different on their-- on their  
22 competition, depending on the circumstances. So the  
23 rules require that agencies use as much competition  
24 as is possible and practicable. So as Commissioner  
25 Park was just describing, for their scaling up of

1  
2 their shelter services, they used essentially a very,  
3 very similar selection and evaluation process as they  
4 would for their standard shelter services. That  
5 didn't change is my understanding.

6       Whereas in another contract, in another instance  
7 where again, in HPD's normal emergency portfolio, a  
8 wall falls down and you need to react that night, the  
9 selection process is very different.

10       So there is-- I would say emergency contracts are  
11 not inherently noncompetitive or competitive. They  
12 use as much competition as is possible and practical  
13 in the circumstances. And, and it will depend on  
14 each contract that, of course, operating agencies can  
15 speak to more.

16       COMMISSIONER ISCOL: [TO MR. DIAMOND:] Do you  
17 want to talk about the difference between the  
18 competitive process and the-- uh--

19       COMMISSIONER PARK: I can chime in on that while--  
20 - while they're strategizing. More than half of the  
21 emergency contracts that were referenced are DHS  
22 contracts. We did an RFP. Each of those-- so for  
23 every single one of those contracts, somebody  
24 submitted a proposal, we had a committee of reviewers  
25 looking at it. We-- We assessed the viability of the

3 proposal of the contracting organization. We  
4 negotiated a budget. So the emergency process  
5 allowed us to move more quickly, but we went through  
6 a full competitive process.

7 CHAIRPERSON WON: Commissioner Park, who are your  
8 three raters who assess emergency proposals?

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: It's staff across the agency  
10 and it's going to be different people for each  
11 proposal. It would be an overwhelming volume of work  
12 to put on-- on three individuals.

13 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. How's your  
14 determination-- I don't think the answer was actually  
15 given for my last question for the long-term plan for  
16 transitioning to non-emergency procurement.

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: So I think given-- given the  
18 nature, as we've been discussing, is that emergency  
19 procurement is under-- depending on which contract  
20 that we're talking about, in some cases, it was about  
21 getting to registration, getting to the place where  
22 we could pay more quickly. In other cases, it was  
23 really about vendor selection. For-- in the DHS  
24 context, for example, where we did do a full  
25 competitive procurement and selection process, we are  
now thinking about what the terms of those contracts

3 should be. We are pivoting to slightly longer term  
4 contracts so that we can-- can get to a more  
5 structured place than we have been. In other cases,  
6 again, as my colleagues have mentioned, and they can  
7 speak to in more detail, we're actually doing new  
8 procurements to replace some of those emergencies.  
9 But Dr. Long you want to speak to that?

10 DR. LONG: Yeah. No, I thank you. And I  
11 appreciate the question.

12 So, the way that we're looking at continued  
13 operations that are HERCC sites is working in each  
14 service and lining them up individually. For each of  
15 them-- Actually, for many of them, but not all of  
16 them, we needed to have emergency speed to manage the  
17 scale of the number of people coming into New York  
18 City. But for some, for example, for laundry, and  
19 security services at our HERRCs, we were actually  
20 able to leverage contracts that had been put out to  
21 RFP through New York City Health + Hospitals for  
22 providing the same services in the hospitals. Then  
23 when the scale surpassed what those contracts were  
24 able to manage, we either extended them and/or we  
25 went to emergency procurement for additional  
contracts, just given that the capacity that we had



2 with those vendors wasn't enough to meet the need of  
3 asylum seekers coming in.

4 For other ones like medical services, intake, and  
5 food, we didn't have any natural contracts to build  
6 off of. So for those, we went to an emergency  
7 procurement at H+H. But we've already, since doing  
8 that work, when we had to keep-- when there was an  
9 emergency level speed, and we had to use emergency  
10 procurement in order to meet the scale and the demand  
11 of people coming in. We've put out three RFPs so  
12 far. Two have closed, one is currently open. That's  
13 for project management, food, and security.

14 So as we transition, agreeing with your point,  
15 Councilmember Won, we are using this as an  
16 opportunity, looking ahead to have a competitive  
17 process to select the right vendors moving forward.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But how do we explain to the  
19 public that (according to the media) the laundry for  
20 DHS it is 99 cents a pound, but for the contract that  
21 you have is \$3 a pound? How do we explain that to  
22 the public?

23 DR. LONG: I think-- I'm not sure the contracts  
24 that we have at our HERRCs are \$3 a pound. Maybe we  
25 can-- what I can speak to is to use some specific

2 examples: Initially, when we open HERRCs for  
3 laundry, we use Sodexo, because that's the same  
4 service that does laundry for my patients in the  
5 hospital.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

7 DR. LONG: And we can get back to you about the  
8 numbers for Sodexo.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's the one that's \$3 a  
10 pound.

11 DR. LONG: I can actually try to-- [TO  
12 COMMISSIONER ISCOL:] Go ahead.

13 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I read the article, the \$3  
14 per pound is a Garner contract. That's a citywide  
15 requirements contract. The \$3 is based off of the  
16 federal GSA schedule, is where that pricing comes  
17 from.

18 I also want to be clear, just because we-- it  
19 says \$3 per pound, it doesn't mean you're actually  
20 paying for \$3 per pound, it could mean you're paying  
21 up to \$3 per pound. But that was-- The Garner  
22 contract was not an emergency procurement. That is a  
23 citywide requirements contract that was competitively  
24 bid ahead of this emergency for times of emergency.

1  
2       So I think one of the problems that we're dealing  
3 with, Councilmember, is that there is a lot of  
4 conflation going on by members of the press, and dare  
5 I say members of the City Council, in terms of what  
6 are emergency contracts and what are not.

7       I think it's also important just to outline that  
8 in an emergency contract process, right?, we're still  
9 obtaining prior approval from the Law Department and  
10 the Comptroller. We're still going through a robust  
11 vendor selection process. We're still getting final  
12 approval from those affirmation parties. We're still  
13 filing with the Comptroller. They've been incredibly  
14 helpful throughout this process.

15       And then we're still doing the notifications to  
16 the Council and implementation in the city records.

17       CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I understand that. One of  
18 the problems is transparency is not extremely  
19 evident, maybe more for the city than, with all due  
20 respect to Health + Hospitals, because you're not a  
21 city agency.

22       So one of the reasons when you say-- we con--  
23 it's conflated by the press and the City Council is  
24 because it is really hard to get this information.  
25 Sometimes material is redacted when you are trying to

1  
2 get the contracts. And I have to also say just by  
3 not enabling the contractors to be here-- you didn't  
4 call but inter-governmental call to tell certain  
5 people not to show up from the mayor's office. We  
6 have a fact here. So, I mean, we all need to be  
7 transparent. And then maybe people would understand  
8 "up to 3", as opposed to 99 cents per pound. It's  
9 not transparent.

10 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I'm sorry. The only point I  
11 was making with that is that the Garner contract  
12 specifically is not an emergency procurement.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I understand.

14 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: The Garner contract was a  
15 competitively bid citywide requirements contract--

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I understand that. But then  
17 you have--

18 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: --that was called an  
19 emergency contract in the press today.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

21 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: It is not an emergency  
22 contract; it was competitively bit.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But then we have to  
24 understand why is it 99 cents in else, and why is it  
25 \$3 here?

1  
2 MR. BLANCO: And can I just add one point,  
3 Councilmember Brewer? Just to agree with you about  
4 the need for transparency: That's why we've put out  
5 the three RFPs that we have through H+H. Our RFP  
6 process for New York City Health + Hospitals is  
7 public. We lay out the process itself, how it works,  
8 how diligence works. That's all-- Those policies  
9 that we have are all public. So we're applying the  
10 same public policies and procedures, which are how we  
11 govern our hospitals as well, to the services that  
12 are outlined, including-- We haven't yet done  
13 laundry, but we intend to.

14 CHAIRPERSON WON: To that point, going back to  
15 Mr. Diamond, could you help me understand--  
16 Commissioner Park just said that it normally takes 18  
17 months to register contracts through traditional  
18 bidding, but they can-- but you all are able to do  
19 this much quicker.

20 So what is being missed or omitted during  
21 emergency review that allows you to go so much  
22 faster, then? Since you're still saying that it is  
23 competitive.

24 MR. DIAMOND: Absolutely. Thank you,  
25 Councilmember. So, in particular, to Commissioner

1 Park's example, I believe that was for a Human  
2 Services shelter RFP, which again, is specific to the  
3 issue at hand, but also is a contract that takes a  
4 particularly long amount of time.  
5

6 Now, the various things that are going to be in  
7 there. Um, I would give there are certainly things  
8 that are excluded from the process such as a public  
9 hearing does not occur and an emergency contract.

10 There are going to be exclusions. However, I think  
11 as Commissioner Park very accurately described, the  
12 evaluation, the pool that they're-- they're  
13 addressing, and that they're evaluating from, they're  
14 building from their existing scale, and then trying  
15 to scale it up through an emergency procurement. So  
16 I'll defer to Commissioner Park about specific to the  
17 shelter. However, in terms of the the-- the length  
18 of a process, it really is that two-step that we  
19 described, that that the Commissioner described:  
20 Prior approval and final approval. Some would say  
21 that that's more rigorous, requires more insight. It  
22 is different. But it does require both prior  
23 approval, final approval, filing, and it has its own  
24 inbuilt checks and balances from the charter.

1  
2 I'll defer to Commissioner Park if she has  
3 anything else to add.

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yeah, I think there's--

5 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: [TO MR. DIAMOND] [inaudible]

6 MR. DIAMOND: Yeah. And specifically, it is the  
7 prior approval of the Comptroller and the Law  
8 Department. And then the final approval of the  
9 Comptroller and the Law Department to be clear. Uh,  
10 yeah.

11 COMMISSIONER PARK: There's-- In a standard  
12 process, there's built in specific lengths of time  
13 that people have for a response, for a review, for--  
14 and all the many different oversights. So people are  
15 moving more quickly. That includes my staff moving  
16 more quickly. It includes the vendors moving more  
17 quickly for reviewing. But all-- But just  
18 importantly, as was said, when there are pre-  
19 approvals for the concept of the procurement, that--  
20 that we are able to move much more quickly.

21 MR. DIAMOND: I'm sorry to very quickly,  
22 Councilmember, if I may: Also, much of this process  
23 does still occur. And important point is: An  
24 emergency contract allows an agency and a contract to  
25 be effective earlier in the process. So, although

1  
2 some of the processes occurring, it allows work to  
3 start earlier in the procurement process. It changes  
4 the timing slightly. So, I would also note that.  
5 That it's really, as well as about allowing the work  
6 to occur early, will allow those checks and balances  
7 to play out. I'm sorry, Dr. Long.

8 DR. LONG: I was just going to add Councilmember  
9 Brewer, in favor of transparency (and we're here to  
10 be as transparent as possible) you-- I want to answer  
11 your specific question. So Sodexo, which is the  
12 predominant vendor that we still use for laundry  
13 services at the HERRCs was procured through a  
14 competitive RFP, again for our hospitals, for my  
15 patients in the hospital. And the price per pound  
16 that we pay Sodexo is at or below 99 cents per pound,  
17 which you referenced.

18 Just to make the point that we agree with  
19 transparency. And we agree with having a competitive  
20 process, because that's what was used to achieve the  
21 Sodexo price point that we have right now that we've  
22 been able to leverage through New York City Health +  
23 Hospitals, it was competitively put through the RFP  
24 process.



1           CHAIRPERSON WON: I'm-- We are a little baffled  
2  
3 here by what you're saying. Because what's going on  
4 with our MWBEs? Is it-- Are you fast tracking  
5 through MWBE or small businesses? And we also have  
6 found in both of our districts, along-- amongst the  
7 entire City Council as well, for nonprofit providers  
8 as well as in other districts, we've seen that even  
9 if they're given the contract, especially for DHS,  
10 more than half of my shelters (which I have over 30  
11 have in my district), they remain empty and are only  
12 staffed by National Guard because the nonprofit  
13 providers haven't received their advanced payments,  
14 or were not able to bring themselves up to capacity.

15           So you-- you tell me that it's moving faster, but  
16 in some cases it's not either. And I want to  
17 understand. We have other questions and we're going  
18 to move on, but we'll dive into MWBE questioning  
19 later.

20           The last question that I have for every single  
21 agency that is present today is: How are emergency  
22 vendors selected? How are they found? And what is  
23 the vetting conducted for emergency vendors,  
24 especially with the current scenario with DocGo? The  
25

3 public has a lot of questions about how you are  
4 selecting your vendors.

5 MR. DIAMOND: I can start generally and then turn  
6 to the agencies if that would work. So in terms of--  
7 for the selecting a vendor and emergency procurement,  
8 and as Commissioner Iscol said very clearly, there's  
9 a lot of different types of procurements that we're  
10 doing, just to list them: RFPs, bids, the use of P  
11 cards, MWBE non-competitive small purchases,  
12 traditional small purchases.

13 But if we're talking about just the emergency  
14 procurement method, the key phrase that we used  
15 earlier is "as much competition as is possible and  
16 practicable." So it will differ for those different  
17 agencies.

18 In terms of their integrity, and going through  
19 that process, the standard is-- is the same. Every  
20 single contractor that the city contracts with must  
21 be found responsible by their agency for the receipt  
22 of public funds. That standard exists in emergency  
23 procurements, as in standard procurements. So the  
24 competition aspect, we can dive into how it is  
25 contract to contract on a case-by-case basis. But  
those are the general aspects.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON WON: So for competition as possible  
3 and practical, how is that reported and shared with  
4 the public?

5 MR. DIAMOND: In terms of how-- So in terms of  
6 how that competition is then done? That is included  
7 not only in the final approval to the Comptroller,  
8 and to the Law Department-- That's exactly where you  
9 say-- you say, "How did I use this approval you gave  
10 me?" That's also included in the notice to the City  
11 Council. So the City Council, and in the case of  
12 DocGo and others gets a formal notification that  
13 indicates, and I think the exact phrasing is usually  
14 "How is this vendor selected?" So it will describe  
15 the amount of competition in every single case.

16 [TO COMMISSIONER ISCOL]: And Commissioner,  
17 please?

18 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I just want to add one thing  
19 to that, if we could just back up, Chairwoman. So we  
20 have-- Before we even start the process of an  
21 emergency contract, one of the things that we do is  
22 we sort of look and see: Do we even need to do an  
23 emergency procurement, right? In most cases, there  
24 might be a city contract held by another agency,  
25 there could be a citywide requirements contract, or

1 something else that has gone through a competitive  
2 process in the past that we can leverage.

3  
4 We also have leveraged contracts that might be  
5 owned by the state in the past, right?, because they  
6 have gone through a competitive process.

7 So before we even determine whether we need to do  
8 an emergency contract, we make a determination to see  
9 if there are existing contracts in place that we  
10 could possibly use. That's part of the process.

11 I think the other thing is: A lot of this is  
12 sometimes contract dependent. So, for example, at  
13 our respite centers, we set up a laundry service  
14 where we provide vouchers to our guests where they  
15 can go to a local laundromat facility. So in that  
16 process, my team ended up calling around to -- I can  
17 get you the exact number, but it was a lot of  
18 laundromats, but they had to be clearly within  
19 walking distance or close to those facilities.

20 The point I'm trying to make is that sometimes in  
21 terms of the process of identifying contractors, it  
22 varies based on what the actual contract is serving  
23 and what the needs are based on that specific case.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, and I'll  
25 just kind of follow up. Like Zach said: So for HPD

1  
2 in particular, you know, we had a very unique  
3 program, we were being asked to stand up, right? And  
4 as Charles told you, the amount of, like, competition  
5 in the procurement process kind of really depends on  
6 the objective and program.

7       So back in the spring of 2023, HPD was asked to  
8 stand up a program to essentially decompress the  
9 city, right? To relieve some of the pressure we had  
10 here. And it's a moment in time when, you know, DHS  
11 had stood up dozens and dozens of new shelters in  
12 hotels, right? And they essentially maxed out their  
13 ability to stand up new shelters and new hotels, and  
14 we needed additional hands to do some of that work.  
15 And so we, HPD, were brought in to do some of that,  
16 right? To identify sites Upstate, hotels in Upstate  
17 communities, to transfer asylum seekers who  
18 volunteered to those Upstate communities. So it was  
19 quite a unique thing we were trying to accomplish  
20 there. So we reached out to our sister agencies,  
21 both DHS and H+H to better understand the vendors  
22 that they had working for them. So I'm just going to  
23 turn it over for a second to Dr. Long, who will talk  
24 a little bit about DocGo and the relationship they

1 had, and then he'll turn it back over to me to help  
2 you understand how we selected them, if that's okay.

3  
4 DR. LONG: Yeah, so to answer your specific  
5 question, I'll say a couple of words about our  
6 emergency procurement procedures at H+H. And then  
7 I'll say a few words about DocGo in particular, and  
8 then turn back to George.

9 So at H+H, we have a standard operating procedure  
10 for emergency procurement, remembering that we are a  
11 hospital system so we run eleven emergency rooms,  
12 five trauma centers. So the reason we have a  
13 standard operating procedure is emergencies are not  
14 something that's foreign to us. This is part of our  
15 day-to-day operations. We then have applied that  
16 emergency-- standard emergency-- our standard  
17 operating procedure for the asylum seeker crisis to  
18 obtain or procure different services that are needed  
19 to meet the need and in the scale of the crisis.

20 If we were able to use an existing contract (as  
21 Commissioner Iscol was alluding to) that we had ahead  
22 of time, like for security, or like for laundry, we  
23 did that. Then we would max that out, sometimes  
24 extend that, but then if the scale was-- necessitated  
25 us going beyond that, that's where we'd apply our

1 standard operating procedure, which we-- we've used  
2 many times over many years for an emergency  
3 procurement.  
4

5 At the earliest possible time, we would then, as  
6 we've done three times already, go to an RFP to make  
7 sure that we have the vendors we're using, have had  
8 every-- every opportunity to have competition  
9 introduced into the process.

10 Specific for DocGo, I think as everybody recalls,  
11 with New York City Test & Trace, I had the  
12 opportunity to lead a lot of the operations for New  
13 York City's response to COVID. And one of the things  
14 we learned early on is that we needed to bring  
15 services around to people where they were. It  
16 started with testing, then a bridge to vaccines, then  
17 a bridge to-- we became the first city in the country  
18 to have the mobile Test-to-Treat Fleet. We actually  
19 had a specific RFP for that, where you could go get  
20 tested and within 20 minutes walk away with Paxlovid,  
21 which can save your life. Other cities followed. We  
22 were the first. But by definition there, we were--  
23 we were trailblazing and going fast. And in some of  
24 these opportunities, DocGo became a vendor that we  
25 began to use.

1  
2 We then, as we got involved with the asylum  
3 seeker crisis, initially used DocGo at the Port  
4 Authority, where we saw that there was a need for  
5 asylum seekers coming in to New York City to have  
6 immediate medical care. Some poignant examples,  
7 which stick with me as a doctor is we had a child  
8 with a witnessed seizure because ICE took his  
9 medications away at the border, his antiepileptics.  
10 We saved his life, brought him to the hospital.  
11 That's what we are: New York City Health +  
12 Hospitals. But if we hadn't had a medical team  
13 there, I don't know if-- I don't know what would have  
14 happened.

15 We've also had pregnant women that have delivered  
16 babies right away.

17 So we saw that there was a need there. And then  
18 we bridged further. At the navigation center, we  
19 began to use DocGo to provide other services,  
20 including social work, connections to completing the  
21 forms, and connecting with a warm handoff to DOE to  
22 enroll kids in school, which is incredibly important  
23 for their mental health.

24 Then beyond that, we at H+H started to use them  
25 to provide additional services at our sites.



1  
2       The way to conceptualize our sites and how  
3 different vendors provide different services is you  
4 can conceptualize our HERRCs like a hospital. In a  
5 hospital, we provide different services, we have the  
6 doctors like me, we have laundry services, we have  
7 security services, we have food services, and we had  
8 to find the right vendor to meet all of those  
9 different service needs. And we again, expanded what  
10 the DocGo vendor in particular was doing to meet  
11 those needs. But for other services, we were able to  
12 use actually the same vendors that-- that we use at  
13 our hospitals. So that's sort of the history, and  
14 I'll pass back to--

15       CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Well, I just want to say one  
16 thing. As a longtime city employee, the difference  
17 between the hospitals and DocGo is the following:  
18 Your hospital employees are H+H employees, and they  
19 will be there, thank goodness for many years with  
20 their expertise and their, what I call, intellectual  
21 property. DocGo is going to go. They might go to  
22 Texas, they might go to Alabama. They're not going  
23 to be here forever. That is, to me the wrong way  
24 (not your fault, but this is what we're doing) to  
25 approach public service, because they will take that

1  
2 expertise in casework, and busing, and whatever else  
3 they do somewhere else.

4       So for lots of reasons, this contract is too  
5 expensive, wrong people doing the services. I like  
6 the analogy, "we're like a hospital," but we're not  
7 cause we don't have long-time employees who will take  
8 this information and use it for the rest of their  
9 lives to help residents of New York. I really feel  
10 strongly about that. Thank you.

11       DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: So just to--  
12 Thank you Councilmember. Just to finish up though.  
13 So when HPD was brought into this, like there was a  
14 need to kind of move very quickly, right? Because we  
15 needed to kind of relieve some of the pressure in the  
16 city. So we had to (to Charles's point) figure out  
17 what's-- what's practical, given the needs that we  
18 have to do. So we reached out to DHS and we reached  
19 out to H+H to get a sense of, like, who are the  
20 vendors doing this work, in this universe, in this  
21 sector that we could potentially tap into to kind of  
22 achieve our program objectives, you know? So, at the  
23 time, it was very clear, the DHS providers were very  
24 tapped out. You know, they were at capacity and  
25 couldn't actually help us. We met a couple other

3 folks through the folks at H+H, you know, Garner and  
4 DocGo, and we've actually brought in Garner to do the  
5 Jefferson work, and we've contracted with them there,  
6 and said they stood up a HERCC there, and we brought  
7 on DocGo. And I think as Dr. Long mentioned, DocGo  
8 has a specific experience and skillset that was very  
9 unique to, kind of, the Upstate program, right?

10 The Upstate program was about moving into  
11 communities we've never been in. Like, we have no  
12 footprint there. We have no infrastructure there.  
13 But we have hotels there, and we have opportunity  
14 there to, you know, advance the decompression  
15 strategy down here. So, this is what DocGo does,  
16 right? They're able to-- Like, they're-- they're  
17 qualified in their kind of logistical experience and  
18 mobilization, you know? They move into an area, set  
19 up operations, hire a bunch of people, and keep it  
20 moving, you know? And at the time this is what was,  
21 like, most important, because we really wanted to  
22 keep people off the streets. And that's our primary  
23 objective.

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: And if I could chime in.

25 First of all, I just want to clarify, to  
Councilmember Won's comment about the sites that are

3 operated by DHS versus providers: 89 of our shelters  
4 are operated by providers, 58 are operated by a  
5 combination of DHS staff and National Guard. The  
6 reason why we have the directly-operated sites with  
7 the National Guard is-- it's not a contracting issue.  
8 It is because the same way it is challenging for the-  
9 - for anybody to staff up very quickly, it is-- it's  
10 challenging for the not-for-profits to strap the  
11 staff up very quickly. So, we are linking a not-for-  
12 profit to a given site. As of-- We need to open the  
13 site on day one, but they can't necessarily staff it  
14 on day one. And in a more typical scenario, right?,  
15 there is a many-month process between when-- while  
16 that site is being constructed, that they would also  
17 be preparing to staff up. So we are serving as a  
18 bridge, and then as soon as they are able to take  
19 over the staffing, they do so.

20 But to answer the specific question that you  
21 asked about how we're selecting vendors: We're doing  
22 it through an RFP process.

23 CHAIRPERSON WON: So for the shelters, the hotel  
24 shelters that do not need to be stood up, but  
25 continue to remain empty in my district with no staff  
other than National Guard, where someone has

1 committed suicide because there was no services  
2 there, when is enough of a time that you've given  
3 them, for them to staff up? And how long are you  
4 going to hold their contracting value hostage where  
5 someone else could be a provider on time?  
6

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Councilmember.

8 Just to clarify, nobody's contract is being held  
9 hostage. We are moving all the contracts promptly.

10 The providers are working to staff up and we have  
11 seen very rapid movement among those-- those

12 providers. I'm very grateful for the work that they

13 do. I think the last time I was here, it was a lower  
14 percentage of sites that were provider staffed.

15 You've seen-- We see that increase because providers  
16 are stepping in and filling that role. I'm certainly  
17 not going to comment on the record about any

18 individual's mental health experience, but I would

19 just note that all of these individuals have gone

20 through a great deal of travel and trauma, and-- and

21 I don't want to oversimplify what is going in any--

22 CHAIRPERSON WON: So how many months are you

23 going to wait for a nonprofit service provider to

24 staff up until you need to move on to another

25 provider that can have capacity to do it?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER PARK: These sites have been, uh,  
3 procured over an extended period of time we started  
4 doing this in in April, May, June of 2022. The early  
5 sites are all staffed up. More recent sites were  
6 procured even just a few months ago. So, this is not  
7 a static population of sites that are DHS run. We  
8 are moving our staff around. But, each-- each  
9 provider's situation is unique. As George mentioned,  
10 we have found that the DHS-- the traditional DHS  
11 providers have been at capacity. We've been-- We've  
12 worked with our sister agencies that also worked with  
13 human service providers to identify additional  
14 providers, but we have a really robust group of not-  
15 for-profits that have stood up, that are doing  
16 tremendous work. And we are working with each and  
17 every one of them to get into the shelters.

18           CHAIRPERSON WON: We are going to soon send you  
19 my district's list of shelters (which is more than  
20 12) that do not have shelter providers on the day  
21 that they have opened. We will also send you a  
22 citywide list of shelters that continue to have a  
23 provider on contract, yet an empty hotel shelter for  
24 the migrants. I'm going to hand it over to  
25 Councilmember Brewer to continue questioning. I also

2 want to acknowledge Councilmember Ariola,  
3 Councilmember Avilés, and Councilmember Stevens for  
4 joining us.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. I just want to  
6 go back, Commissioner Park, to this same issue, which  
7 is: If you are a single room occupancy shelter with  
8 the National Guard (I happen to think the National  
9 Guard is fabulous; I talk to them all the time) but  
10 then-- and then your staff comes and goes. So it  
11 makes it hard for those in the community to be able  
12 to be of assistance to the families because there's  
13 no consistency.

14 My question is this: Is there a nonprofit that  
15 is being paid even though they're not on site?

16 COMMISSIONER PARK: So all of our not-for-profits  
17 operate on a reimbursement basis. So they're going  
18 to have to show us the expenses that they incurred.  
19 So if they are not on site, if they have no staff  
20 there, they certainly can't bill us for the-- for  
21 staff that aren't there.

22 Just to address the larger question of-- of who  
23 is there: I am incredibly grateful for the National  
24 Guard, and I am incredibly grateful for the agency  
25 staff that is working overtime.

1  
2       Yeah. I couldn't agree with you more that it is  
3 terrific to have city employees doing the work. But  
4 we're in a situation where everybody has a day job,  
5 and we have this this very unusual circumstance.

6       So we have incredible frontline employees who are  
7 working overtime to do this work. And, and it does  
8 mean that there is some transition between the--

9       CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So are the groups that are  
10 supposedly going to be in these shelters getting  
11 advanced payment, even though they're not there? I  
12 know they will get reimbursed when and if they show  
13 up, because that's what we hear, and it's not  
14 transparent.

15       COMMISSIONER PARK: So we are following standard  
16 regulations around advanced payments. But we also  
17 follow standard processes around recoupment. So if,  
18 at the end of the day, it takes longer than  
19 anticipated for a not-for-profit to come into the  
20 shelter, then when they do start to invoice we will  
21 recoup against that advance. We work very hard to  
22 ensure that we are paying only for services received.

23       CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It's just back to the issue  
24 that is information is hard to come by, it's not  
25 transparent, and nobody knows what goes on. When you



2 go to these locations, nobody-- Neither the DHS nor  
3 the National Guard has any clue about new nonprofits  
4 coming in, and these are the ones that don't have the  
5 diapers, the formulas, et cetera. I'm just pointing  
6 that out.

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: Certainly, if there is a site  
8 that is missing key--

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We tell you, but it's not  
10 that we should be doing that. Somebody from DHS  
11 knows about it should be following up. I know you're  
12 overwhelmed, but there is a big disconnect on these  
13 countries.

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: We take this responsibility  
15 very seriously.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: We have DHS staff that are  
18 our full-time staff who are out doing site visits. I  
19 am not aware of a site that that didn't have those  
20 core facilities, but I will certainly follow up with  
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We gave them to your staff.

23 Number two. Thank you, George for giving us the  
24 listing specific at HPD. My question is about the  
25 faith-based, since I know a lot about it.

1  
2           So my understanding is that if you don't have a  
3 sprinkler (I'll make it specific) you can't get  
4 anybody in your space. Guess what, nobody has a  
5 sprinkler, so you have this big-50 vision of faith  
6 based. I believe there are four or five open.  
7 You're never going to get the rest of them open  
8 unless you have some changes at DOB. Nobody has 19  
9 or 13, they can do 10. How in hell's name are you  
10 going to get all of these churches and faith-based  
11 open? Because they're all calling me, and nobody is  
12 eligible under your crazy listings of what you need.

13           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, I mean,  
14 like the crazy listings are, you know, an effort to  
15 keep people safe to--

16           CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But they've been doing the  
17 same work for 30 years without all this crazy  
18 listings. Regular New Yorkers.

19           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: No. We get it.  
20 And I think--

21           CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And I've been in them. So I  
22 know.

23           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: I know. I know.  
24 Like, we're trying to-- We're actually trying to  
25 ensure that there's, like, safety standards that

2 we're adhering to. But at the same time trying to  
3 help some of these houses of worship. We've actually  
4 contracted with NIDIS, the New York Disaster--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'm aware of that.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Okay, and, you  
7 know, we're working with them. And they actually are  
8 trying to support these churches, and synagogues, and  
9 mosques and do the installation when necessary, you  
10 know?

11 So it is kind of slow going--

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Very.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yes, I get that.  
14 But we want to do it in a safe way.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: All right, but you're going  
16 to have to make some changes in your crazy policies  
17 in order to get these places-- I'm just saying.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: I get it, but  
19 like, we don't necessarily think our policies are--

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Because you can't put in--  
21 You can't put in a new sprinkler system and then have  
22 nobody come because you only have 10 spots, and you  
23 don't have 19.

24

25

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Right. So we're  
3 resourcing this too. And I think that's key here,  
4 right?

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Giving them the money? That  
6 resourcing? Is that what that means? The  
7 translation?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yes. Correct.  
9 Translation is giving them money to do some of this  
10 work, right? To install sprinklers and showers. I  
11 think those are two big issues, you know, that we  
12 face in some of our--

13 CHAIRPERSON WON: Well, I'll tell the people who  
14 are contacting me that you will pay for the showers  
15 and the sprinklers.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Well, we'd be  
17 happy to talk to all the people that are contacting  
18 you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I want to go back to  
20 this issue of oversight. What checks are in place to  
21 oversee the work of these for-profit vendors?

22 Because if I was DocGo, or I was Arrow, I would want  
23 to be in this New York City job space forever, right?  
24 Because I am making money. And so, I want to know  
25 what are you doing to make sure that you are doing

1 the right kind of oversight? Arrow is my-- I  
2 understand that was competitively bid. That's my  
3 understanding. They suck. They are not-- they are  
4 outside. Everybody is complaining. They're outside  
5 hanging out. They said F-U to the cops the other  
6 night. They are smoking weed around the corner. I  
7 met the President. Very nice man. He doesn't live  
8 in New York City. So I'm always-- If you don't live  
9 in New York City, I'm not so big on you.

11 But I'm telling you, there's not enough oversight  
12 over Arrow. Who is in charge of overseeing arrow?

13 DR. LONG: So I can start, and then I'll-- I'll  
14 see if George wants to add more about oversight too.

15 So your two questions are: How does oversight  
16 work? And I'll speak from the point of view of the--  
17 of our humanitarian centers. And specifically about  
18 Arrow, who is overseeing arrow? So I'll take it in  
19 that order.

20 So at all of our humanitarian centers of which I-  
21 - my teams currently run 15 today, I have a staff  
22 member, manager, and supervisor on site 24/7 without  
23 exception. Every service that we provide (whether  
24 it's security, food, medical) those are vendors that  
25 provide that service under the program that we

3 designed, and that my staff directly supervises on  
4 site, again around the clock. That includes to your  
5 specific question, my staff, my H+H staff supervise  
6 Arrow, the same as in the hospitals.

7 Now, with respect to Arrow specifically, we have  
8 also received feedback that Arrow could benefit from  
9 further trainings, and I wanted to outline that a lot  
10 of this is based on your feedback, Councilmember  
11 Brewer, what some of the changes are that we're going  
12 to make with Arrow going forward.

13 So we're doing-- We're going to be arranging now  
14 a special training with Arrow that includes a few  
15 different components. One is the structure of the  
16 HERCCs and the OEM system, getting to know some of  
17 the issues asylum seekers have, vigilance on posts  
18 with a no-phone policy, roving posts (which is  
19 different than in the hospitals, because with  
20 security guards, if you're in the hospital, you're in  
21 the hospital), but there's been a need, as you  
22 pointed out, to have security guards do more for our  
23 communities. We want to be a good-- We want to be  
24 good neighbors. That's going to be part of our  
25 specific training here. And also new cultural--

3 cultural training and professionalism training as  
4 well.

5 So based on that feedback, we're making those  
6 changes. Now, I want to thank you for that. And I  
7 also want to say that for security going forward, we  
8 put out-- one of the three RFPs that I mentioned is  
9 for security. That RFP is closed. So, we're going  
10 to soon be going through the process of, with the  
11 competitive bids, and again, there's no better way to  
12 make a process as competitive as possible than going  
13 through an RFP, that we're going to be potentially  
14 selecting new security vendors going forward through  
15 that process.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I don't know how much other  
17 security make, but these folks make more than police  
18 officers first year in the job. If you look at  
19 their-- some of the sites are spending \$25,000 a day  
20 on security. I mean, is that normal?

21 DR. LONG: I would say to that, that there's no  
22 better way to ensure that we're being cost-conscious  
23 and getting the best value with the lowest cost than  
24 going through the RFP process that we just concluded  
25 for security.

1  
2           CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and how long is this  
3 Arrow contract, so that you can do the bid? So the  
4 RFP has already concluded. The Arrow contract that  
5 we initially went through, and just-- I said this  
6 earlier, but just in case anybody came in. So, Arrow  
7 is the security vendor that we use, that we obtained  
8 through an RFP process for New York City Health +  
9 Hospitals. So my patients in my clinics and my  
10 hospitals, Arrow is our security vendor that was  
11 selected through that competitive process.

12           When we opened the humanitarian centers, we had  
13 the opportunity to say, we have a contract already,  
14 as Commissioner of school said. We're going to use  
15 that same contract for very similar services, with  
16 the change being that there are some unique  
17 components and needs of asylum seekers. And based on  
18 Councilmember Brewer's feedback, we've arranged  
19 special training for Arrow. That we're going to be  
20 using a combination of Arrow, and we have another  
21 emergency security contract, because Arrow did not  
22 have enough capacity to obtain the scale that we  
23 needed for the crisis. Until we've gone through the  
24 RFP process, RFP is closed and we're moving as fast  
25 as we can on that.



1  
2           CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. The only issue about  
3 contracts in general is 40% of the contracts now, I  
4 think emergency and others, came from COVID.

5           And so you say to the public, how in the world is  
6 it that 40% of the contracts that were used during  
7 COVID are now part of the migrant experience? And so  
8 that, to me, it's everything, as you can imagine from  
9 DocGo, all of the hotel, and I know, that's a unique  
10 situation, but that's one. Certainly the medical-- I  
11 mean, there's MedRite is one of them. How do you  
12 explain-- (or maybe that's what your job is, I don't  
13 know) that 40% of the contracts that were part of the  
14 previous crisis, shall we say, are now part of this  
15 same...? Go ahead.

16           COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Thank you for the question.  
17 And so I'll turn this over to Charles in a second.  
18 But-- Because that number doesn't sound right to us,  
19 I think that again-- I just ask, you know, as-- You  
20 know, I just ask that we try and stick to facts.

21           There are contracts that we might have had with  
22 vendors during COVID that could be a new contract  
23 with that vendor. There are also contracts, like the  
24 one that you just referenced for Arrow Security's  
25

2 emergency contract that are not emergency contracts.  
3 Those are competitively bid existing contracts.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And I said that. I said it  
5 was--

6 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: And so I just ask that we  
7 make sure that as we are navigating this-- The  
8 contracting process is incredibly complicated. It's  
9 incredibly difficult. We are committed to  
10 transparency, but it's hard enough for the public and  
11 the press to understand what's going on without us  
12 conflating some of these issues.

13 And I'll turn it over to Charles to talk a little  
14 bit about--

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That 40% is a big number,  
16 because what the public thinks is that you're just  
17 doing from one to the next, and there's no  
18 competitive, and therefore the for-profit (because  
19 that's what they are in most cases not all) are  
20 making out like bandits.

21 MR. DIAMOND: And thank you, Councilmember, for  
22 the opportunity to clarify. Because it is important  
23 to know that difference. Because that's not the  
24 case.

1  
2           So these COVID contractors: I'm not aware of a  
3 single contract for the asylum response that is being  
4 leveraged from previous COVID contracts.

5           When Mayor Adams came in, one of the first things  
6 that we did from a contracting standpoint was ensure  
7 that every single COVID contract had a plan for being  
8 wound down, so that we could have the most  
9 competitive procedures, all of those things, and that  
10 was very successful.

11           When this new emergency arose. I-- My  
12 understanding is there might be overlap, 40% overlap  
13 in terms of the vendors being used -- and I'll defer  
14 to those who made those choices as to why they made  
15 those choices -- but structurally, I'm not aware of a  
16 single COVID contract, so to speak-- Every single  
17 one had a new justification. There's not a single  
18 contract from COVID that has now just dragged over.  
19 All of them, to my knowledge, have had their own  
20 independent emergency analysis there. They're not  
21 being carried over directly from--

22           CHAIRPERSON WON: Just to clarify, we're not  
23 saying that it's the same contract. We're saying  
24 it's with the same vendors. 40% of them are with the  
25 same COVID-19 vendors, and the top 13 contracts where

2 billions of dollars are going are to noncertified  
3 MWBEs, which then I can deduce that it's all going to  
4 white men.

5 MR. DIAMOND: Well, certainly I'll defer to the  
6 operating agencies as to the choices they've made.  
7 But I thank you for the opportunity to clarify it.  
8 Certainly, as you pointed out, Councilmember Brewer,  
9 that if there's a public perception that we're just  
10 taking these COVID contracts, that's certainly not  
11 the case. So, I'll turn it over.

12 COMMISSIONER PARK: If I could chime in on some  
13 of the numbers. So, I think we've referenced already  
14 that there are about 200 contracts in this asylum  
15 space. 127 of those are DHS. They are-- Those are  
16 human service contracts. They are with not-for-  
17 profit organizations. So, first of all, there-- Many  
18 of them were operating for DHS during the COVID era,  
19 but as shelter operators, that's not specific to  
20 COVID, and, by definition, they can't be classified  
21 as MWBE because they're not-for-profit organizations  
22 as opposed to for-profits.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, and just--  
24 Sorry, Councilmember Brewer. For our Upstate  
25 program, in addition to-- You know, we have a prime

3 contract with a for-profit, but a lot of our  
4 subcontractors are nonprofits, particularly those  
5 that do case management and social work, particularly  
6 in Monroe County and in Erie County.

7 So these are groups that we know have a better  
8 connection and relationship to the community. So,  
9 they understand their services that that they refer  
10 folks in our care too. So, you know, whenever  
11 possible, we'd like to contract-- subcontract with  
12 CBOs Upstate.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So why can't you just skip  
14 DocGo and just subcontract with the services in Erie  
15 County?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, I think  
17 it's economy--

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's the problem. It's  
19 the for-profit, with the shareholders, who are making  
20 out like bandits.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, I think  
22 what we're trying to do is complement DocGo's kind  
23 of, like, speed, logistics, and mobilization with the  
24 local nonprofits who understand the human service  
25 component.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think that the nonprofits  
3 could handle it. That's my feeling, very, very  
4 strongly.

5 I want to ask, because I spent a lot of time with  
6 Department of Investigation. Part of the PEG letter  
7 the Administration wants in their-- in their judgment  
8 is to reduce the cost of asylum seeker contracts. We  
9 all feel that way. But the fiscal 24 adopted budget  
10 included \$4.6 million for an asylum seeker integrity  
11 monitorship at DOI. However, DOI has requested  
12 additional resources for its integrity monitorship  
13 unit that has not been funded. So I want to know if  
14 this Administration intends to reduce costs of asylum  
15 seeker contracts, wouldn't it make sense to have this  
16 overseeing unit? Now, of course, you've got the  
17 Comptroller looking over you, you've got the City  
18 Council, but this particular unit would be very, very  
19 helpful. What do you say to that asylum seeker  
20 integrity monitorship?

21 MR. DIAMOND: Councilmember, I'm not familiar  
22 exactly with-- with that budget appropriation. I  
23 would say the Department of Investigation is engaged  
24 in oversight of our asylum response right now. That  
25 was something--

2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: With the monitor. That's  
3 the monitor.

4 MR. DIAMOND: Yes. Yeah. So that-- that is in  
5 place right now. I-- If it's regarding if that's a  
6 different appropriation, I apologize, I have to get  
7 back to you. I'm not sure if--

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They need more money.

9 MR. DIAMOND: Well, that's-- I'll certainly defer  
10 to OMB on that.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And it's always important to  
12 have money for oversight. That's what the issue is.  
13 So, you could bring that back.

14 Number two: Have there been any vendors have  
15 contracts referred to DOI for fraud, or overbilling,  
16 or abuse? Have any-- Have any contracts, to the best  
17 of your knowledge, from your agency?

18 [NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE]

19 None? Okay.

20 And then have any contracts been terminated at  
21 all, just out of curiosity, for any reason whatsoever  
22 from this particular crisis?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Sure. I could--  
24 I could chime in. You know, in our Upstate-- a  
25 couple of our Upstate locations, in particular

1  
2 Albany, we've-- we've had difficulty with a couple of  
3 our security vendors, subcontractors, Councilmember,  
4 not the prime contractor. And you know, whenever we  
5 go to new places, we try to find local contractors to  
6 work with. And in this case, you know, one of them  
7 in particular was a local MWBE that worked with  
8 former veterans. And so, it was an effort to kind of  
9 like connect to the local subcontractor, but we had  
10 issues with that particular security vendor. So  
11 we've terminated that contract in particular.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I'm going to call next  
13 (we're going to come back for a second round)  
14 Councilmember Holden.

15 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Chairs, and  
16 thank you all for your hard work. I mean, I-- I  
17 imagine there are some 24-hour days, that you guys  
18 have some sleepless nights, and I thank you for all  
19 the hard work.

20 Some questions: Who in the administration--  
21 There was a bunch of articles on DocGo. We all read  
22 that, and there were some allegations (they were  
23 promised jobs, security guards threatening migrants,  
24 lack of coordination with some of the cities Upstate,  
25 they didn't-- migrants didn't receive medical, some



1  
2 were-- some migrants, the allegations were that they  
3 were dumped in the middle of nowhere). Who in the  
4 administration was looking at that? Did you find  
5 them, some, credible?

6 One second, I just want to get-- I get-- there's  
7 a second part of that question, because I may run out  
8 of time. They only gave us two minutes, so...

9 Mr. Sarkissian, you-- you mentioned, by the way,  
10 there was xenophobia by some people Upstate, some  
11 elected officials, you-- I think you're mentioning.  
12 You mentioned it twice. First of all, what-- what  
13 were some of-- why did you arrive at that? Maybe  
14 they didn't feel they could handle, you know, the--  
15 the migrants. But how do you leverage that? Would  
16 you say that the Administration is xenophobic, since  
17 the Administration is challenging the Right to  
18 Shelter?

19 So, the very the very services you're providing,  
20 the Administration is challenging, yet they're not  
21 xenophobic, but people Upstate are?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Sure. So the  
23 people Upstate that we're talking about used very  
24 dangerous rhetoric, you know?, about some of our--

1  
2 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Like what? Like, tell me  
3 what they said.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: We'll-- We'll  
5 get you a list of quotes, you know, but if--

6 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Elected officials, you  
7 said?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. Town  
9 supervisors, county executives, you know, local  
10 assemblymembers in-- in Newburgh in particular, made  
11 the case that, you know, there were folks that were  
12 kicked out of our Newburgh hotel, because of our  
13 asylum seekers, you know? And it was an effort to  
14 actually block our asylum seekers from coming to  
15 Newburgh, you know? And it was later-- and then we  
16 later found out it was actually a lie. You know?  
17 The, the local folks, you know, that were making up  
18 that lie, and kind of convinced the local  
19 assemblymember, that-- that local veterans were  
20 displaced by our asylum seekers made up a lie, right?

21 So there were actually systematic efforts to  
22 keep--

23 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Right. That was proven.  
24 That was proven.

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. That was  
3 proven.

4 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: But I'm saying that  
5 you're-- you're challenging the Right to Shelter.  
6 You're actually saying that we shouldn't be doing  
7 this.

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: If I can jump in, we're--

9 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Well no. I've-- because  
10 he made allegations. I want-- I want to know. I  
11 wanted just an answer to, first of all, some of the  
12 allegations against DocGo, which I didn't-- you know,  
13 I want to hear that first.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: I'm happy to  
15 talk about the allegations against DocGo. If you  
16 want to list them individually, we can go through  
17 them individually.

18 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: No, I just want some of  
19 the-- What did you find?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, yeah. So  
21 we work closely-- Actually, there's a lot of places  
22 that are actually willing to work with us, you know?,  
23 and we've developed good relationships with the  
24 county of Albany, with Monroe County where Rochester  
25 is, with Erie County where Buffalo is, and we've

2 developed relationships with county executives, city  
3 mayors, town supervisors--

4 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Albany.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. We've--  
6 We've developed really actually good relationships  
7 with these places.

8 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Right.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: So, in addition  
10 to the elected officials, we've developed  
11 relationships with CBOs that we are actually often  
12 subcontracting with, right?, and we have a really  
13 good relationship with the New York Immigration  
14 Coalition. So, we have a lot of folks that are quite  
15 active and are in these places and in our facilities,  
16 and we're talking to them every day, actually. It's--  
17 - It's a full time job, the Up-- the Upstate  
18 Hotelling Program. So our efforts, you know, to  
19 correct when allegations come up, are the result of,  
20 like, direct communication with a lot of these folks,  
21 you know? And so when there's a subcontractor that's  
22 not doing what they're supposed to do, right? Like  
23 we mentioned the subcontractor--

24 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: So these-- Some of these  
25 were credible, and--

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, yeah.

3 Absolutely.

4 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: --you corrected it, and  
5 you--

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: We've corrected--  
7 - Yeah, we've corrected a lot of it.

8 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: --found out. You got rid  
9 of that subcontractor.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Correct. Yeah.

11 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: It wasn't DocGo.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, it was--  
13 It was not DocGo that we got rid of, no. It was it  
14 was-- it was a security--

15 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: None of them, none of the  
16 allegations were caused by DocGo.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: No, no. We're  
18 talking about, um-- we're talking about operational  
19 issues that we've had to correct.

20 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Right. Right. I get it.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: And any big  
22 operation with 5000 asylum seekers or shelter-- or  
23 shelter guests, there are issues to work out, and we  
24 worked them out, you know? We're talking to them  
25 every day.

1  
2 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Right. But-- Okay, now  
3 addressing the Right to Shelter, that was challenged  
4 in court. Tell me-- Tell me how that all fits in  
5 here.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. I'm going  
7 to defer to DHS on that.

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: New York City is currently  
9 sheltering more than 60,000 asylum seekers in  
10 addition to other New Yorkers experiencing  
11 homelessness. We have a deep-seated commitment to  
12 keeping people off the street and ensuring that we  
13 are providing shelter. I think we are looking at  
14 what is the most appropriate way of doing so.

15 But with more than 100,000 people, between the  
16 asylum seekers and other individuals experiencing  
17 shelter in the city's care right now, I-- I don't  
18 think it's appropriate to argue that we are stepping  
19 away from our responsibility to extremely-low-income  
20 New Yorkers.

21 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Well, how would you  
22 explain it then? If you're challenging-- If you're  
23 challenging the Right to Shelter, and you're bending  
24 over back-- You're actually working night and day.  
25 You're working crazy hours, like I said, for--

2 you're not getting sleep. We're putting-- We're  
3 spending billions of dollars of taxpayer money. And  
4 yet you're challenging Right to Shelter. So at what  
5 point-- What do we do then with-- with the migrants  
6 who are coming in? And let's say you win in court?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: Again, I'm going to say the  
8 city is currently sheltering more than 100,000  
9 individuals between asylum seekers and other New  
10 Yorkers. We are deeply committed to meeting the  
11 needs of extremely-low-income New Yorkers, and we are  
12 looking at the most appropriate ways to do that.

13 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: So there is a breaking  
14 point?

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Councilmember,  
16 Councilmember, I got so many people asking questions,  
17 we can come back.

18 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Councilmember Hanif?

20 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much. And  
21 thank you all for being here.

22 I want to dive into DocGo. Commissioner Iscol,  
23 you mentioned that bags of cash are not being handed  
24 to vendors. But we know that NYCEM did not properly  
25 vet DocGo, nor provide justification for the award.

1 I just want to finish before you chime in.

2 DocGo received a \$432 million no-bid contract  
3 without relevant experience that has now been accused  
4 of sexual assault of clients in the city's custody,  
5 issuing fraudulent documents to clients to clients in  
6 the city's custody, and questionable use of funds.

7 And then the Administration has doubled down  
8 aggressively, defending DocGo despite the very  
9 legitimate issues raised by our State Attorney  
10 General, the City Comptroller, and investigative  
11 reporters.

12 And then when faced with legitimate criticism on  
13 this contract, the mayor has simply gone into us-  
14 against-them mode, dismissing it as a politically  
15 motivated-- as politically motivated, when it is  
16 clear that there's substantive problems here.

17 I just want to better understand what the  
18 specific parameters are around DocGo in particular,  
19 where is the administration on transitioning away  
20 from emergency procurement towards standard  
21 contracting practices?

22 And, you know, DocGo is-- is making a lot of  
23 profit off of this contract also. So, I'd like to  
24 just understand the parameters of contracting and  
25



1 specifically about DocGo given all of the serious  
2 allegations.  
3

4 And then my final-- the final thing I'd like to  
5 learn a little bit more about is 163rd Street  
6 Improvement Council. They operate a shelter in  
7 Sunset Park, and then one in my district in Gowanus,  
8 and we've heard many issues around wage theft, and  
9 there was news about sexual harassment in the  
10 emergency shelter specifically in Sunset Park. Could  
11 you share what steps the Admin takes when issues like  
12 this arise with providers and sometimes smaller  
13 providers, and what is the accountability mechanism  
14 here?

15 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: So you're specifically  
16 asking me about the DocGo contract? So I--

17 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Anybody can respond, but I  
18 just wanted to point out the--

19 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Sure.

20 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: -a bit about the bags of  
21 cash. But the other bit I also just want to  
22 acknowledge is-- I appreciated, George, your comment  
23 about the xenophobia Upstate. But I also want to be  
24 clear that the Mayor has also created this division  
25 by saying "asylum seekers are going to destroy New

1 York City." That also incites xenophobia. It  
2 incites the violence that we are going to see with  
3 directives like the 60-day and 30-day rules. So, you  
4 know I-- Councilmember Holden brings up a really good  
5 point around what are the-- these allegations of  
6 xenophobia? But we need to admit that this  
7 Administration is also fueling that xenophobia.  
8

9 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: So, as always,  
10 Councilmember, thank you for your questions.

11 So first off, in terms of the process, as you are  
12 aware, Emergency Management does not hold the DocGo  
13 contract. It's an HPD contract. With that said,  
14 that contract, as all emergency procurements do,  
15 obtained prior approval from the Comptroller and from  
16 the Law Department. It also received final approval,  
17 approval from the Comptroller and the Law Department.  
18 The Comptroller also filed that contract, which is  
19 what you do. It's the same as registering the  
20 contract, but under emergency procedures.

21 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Can you just walk me  
22 through like all of these issues that I've raised?  
23 Like, what happens now?

24 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: So, I will-- I'm trying to  
25 answer your questions. And I will turn it over to

1 George to specific-- to talk specifically about  
2 DocGo. With that said, at our respite sites, when  
3 there's an allegation towards a staff member or  
4 somebody there, we take that very seriously.  
5

6 And to Councilmember Brewer's question about  
7 terminating contracts: We have not turned in any  
8 contracts, but we have terminated folks who are  
9 employed by certain contracts because of their  
10 behavior at those sites. And those are things that  
11 we've had to do, unfortunately. But we take all of  
12 those allegations very seriously.

13 And I'll turn it over to George to speak more  
14 specifically about DocGo to answer those questions  
15 for you.

16 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: I'd love to see just a  
17 report, or-- to get a clearer understanding of how  
18 many people have been let go and from which groups,  
19 because 163rd Council and some of these other  
20 providers are operating in our in our districts, and  
21 it's important for us to be engaged, and not to learn  
22 just through the news. And we need to be prepared as  
23 a city to be able to have accountability as-- as we  
24 continue to welcome asylum seekers, and as we want to  
25 encourage other providers to be involved as well.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, and--

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I just want to say, it is  
4 complicated to understand why HPD is in charge of  
5 DocGo, and sort of-- the-- also help the  
6 Councilmember and all of us understand this cross  
7 agency, because it is so many agencies involved, why  
8 HPD is doing DocGo for H+H, for--

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: [inaudible]

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, but there are separate  
11 contracts, with this cross-agency confusion. Can you  
12 explain it?

13 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, so-- Sorry. I don't  
14 know which one you want me to answer first, because  
15 we have you know, Councilmember Hanif asking George  
16 about DocGo. I'm happy to talk about the interagency  
17 process. Where do you want us to start?

18 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: They are both important  
19 questions, and I think this is just demonstrating the  
20 confusion--

21 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Well, we can't both speak at  
22 the same time.

23 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: --that we're experiencing.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Start with George, and then  
25 you.

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, let me--  
3 let me just talk a little bit about DocGo. Thanks,  
4 Councilmember Hanif, for the question. Like, we take  
5 all the-- all the allegations seriously, all right?  
6 They are people in our care, and they are our  
7 responsibility, you know? The folks at HPD,  
8 Councilmember Brewer, care a lot about the work, you  
9 know? Like, the work that we're doing, we care a lot  
10 about it. So, we put in the hours, and we take the  
11 allegations seriously. We don't, like, rest on any  
12 of it and assume stuff is not true when it might be  
13 true.

14 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: What's the "taking  
15 seriously" part though?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: So-- So this is,  
17 what we do. Like, we're-- Every 10 a.m. hour, in the  
18 morning, every day, I'm talking to DocGo, right? And  
19 anytime we hear an allegation, we're bringing it to  
20 their attention, you know? And they actually are  
21 pretty good at looking into these allegations, you  
22 know? And what they do is they, you know, contact  
23 staff on site, get a sense of what's happening,  
24 report back, and they usually do it in a matter of  
25 like minutes to an hour, you know? And then what we

1 do is work out the response together, you know? And  
2 that's, like, how we do this oversight. And we've  
3 made changes as a result of these allegations, you  
4 know? There's, like I said, subcontractors that  
5 we've removed, you know? There are people that have  
6 now are no longer working at these sites, you know,  
7 because of some of the things that they have  
8 potentially done, you know? So we want to protect  
9 our asylum seekers. You know, a lot of these  
10 incidents actually involve us, you know, conducting  
11 orientations, you know? When people come and arrive  
12 at our-- at our centers, we want to make sure  
13 everyone understands there's a code of conduct that  
14 everyone has to kind of, you know, adhere to, you  
15 know? We do domestic violence training, you know,  
16 for all of our employees, for all the employees and  
17 all the asylum seekers that are coming, so they  
18 understand what's-- what's prohibited and what's not,  
19 you know? So, we do a lot of that, and we do a lot  
20 of the course correction.

22 And look, talking to the new president, so the  
23 new CEO, Lee Bienstock, you know, we've-- we've  
24 agreed that for now, what we're going to do is we're  
25 going to focus on refining operations. You know, I

1 think there was an effort in the past to expand-  
2 expand-expand, quickly-quickly-quickly, we're going  
3 to work on what we have, you know?, to get it right  
4 and make sure that, you know, the asylum seekers that  
5 are in our care are getting the level of service that  
6 they need and deserve.

8 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: And to answer Councilmember  
9 Brewer's question: As you are all aware, we've been  
10 saying this now for over a year, this is an  
11 unprecedented emergency. We have over 100,000 people  
12 in the City's care, 60,000 of them are asylum seekers  
13 or migrants. We have opened up over 200 emergency  
14 shelters. There is no single agency that can handle  
15 it on its own. And this is the normal course of  
16 business when we have an emergency. When we had the  
17 tragic building collapse down on Ann Street, we  
18 relied on other agencies to do the demolition  
19 contract, to help us with the removal of the  
20 vehicles, to set aside places for those vehicles to  
21 go. When we had the tragic Bronx fire, we leaned  
22 very heavily on HPD because of their expertise with  
23 the American Red Cross and the housing contract. It  
24 is very normal in the city. And so to answer your  
25 question, specifically, when we have an emergency,

3 one of the things we do is we look at what agency has  
4 specific expertise to the problem that needs to be  
5 solved. In this case, DSS and DHS. Of course they  
6 have a lot of-- of capacity and ability, and that's  
7 why they have shouldered more of this burden than any  
8 other agency. But Health + Hospitals and HPD also  
9 have expertise when it comes to sheltering and  
10 housing people.

11 When we opened up the respite centers, we were  
12 specifically adopting a model we use for coastal  
13 storm shelters. It's not ideal. But in this  
14 unprecedented emergency, we have had to rely on every  
15 single bit of expertise that rely on that-- that  
16 exists in a variety of different agencies to handle  
17 it. And that's one of the reasons you see, so many  
18 agencies participate. And I think that's a strength,  
19 not a weakness.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I agree. I think it's  
21 agencies that participate. But you have, I don't  
22 know-- How many laundry companies are participating?  
23 I have no idea. But I'm just saying, you have a  
24 laundry company, HPD has laundry accompany, DSS has a  
25 laundry company, H+H has-- I don't know.



2 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We also rely on each  
3 contracts--

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You all have laundry  
5 companies.

6 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: --but sometimes those  
7 contractors are no longer able to do all the work  
8 themselves, in which case we have to find a new  
9 vendor, which is what we've done in a lot of cases.  
10 Or they might be specific to a certain type of  
11 service for some reason.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But that's different than  
13 city workers working together, if I may say so. It's  
14 very-- To me, it's very different.

15 COMMISSIONER PARK: Councilmember Hanif, I can  
16 speak to the 163rd Street Improvement Council. They  
17 are a DHS contractor.

18 They were not a contractor that we worked with  
19 before this-- this particular set of circumstances.  
20 As I mentioned, we reached out and have contracted  
21 with a number of new providers because the scope of  
22 the issue was so significant.

23 They absolutely have had some challenges with  
24 their operations. It has been-- Yeah, and some real  
25 issues there. We have scaled back our footprint with

1  
2 the 163rd Street Improvement Council, and we are  
3 monitoring and working with them very closely.

4 I will say I think this is a reflection of, you  
5 know, us trying to move quickly, of them trying to  
6 grow quickly with us. You know, our goal is always  
7 to get not-for-profit providers to the place where  
8 they can provide services that are of the quality  
9 that we expect and you expect. That was not  
10 initially the case with the 163rd Street Improvement  
11 Council, but I believe we can get there.

12 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: I really appreciate that  
13 response. Thank you.

14 And to what, George, you shared: I'm still a bit  
15 baffled by the DocGo situation, particularly the  
16 egregious allegations and the ways in which they're  
17 treating clients. So, I'd like to follow up. But  
18 it's good to know that there are some parameters that  
19 you're all setting, but it's still very unclear  
20 whether the-- the Admin is in charge when allegations  
21 come up, versus the organization or the vendor  
22 needing to figure out how to assemble itself.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: We're in charge  
24 1000 percent.

1  
2 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Okay, because if that's the  
3 case--

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: We're making the  
5 calls, and if subcontractors are replaced, it's  
6 because we've replaced them.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Right. And since that's  
8 the case--

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: If people are  
10 let go, it's because we told them that.

11 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Since that's the case, it's  
12 really important that we-- we see efficacy, and that  
13 we receive more transparency, when there are vendors  
14 out here who are charged with sexual assault and all  
15 of these other issues of mismanagement, because then  
16 it actually reflects that the Administration is  
17 incapable of managing the situation.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, we should  
19 talk about a vendor being accused of sexual assault,  
20 because that's not-- that's unfamiliar to me. But  
21 there-- there have been incidents in our DocGo  
22 hotels, and you know, we respond to them. And you  
23 know what? We're happy to actually invite you to  
24 visit any of our DocGo hotels. We actually have 15  
25 of them down here in the city, you know? So if you'd

1 like to visit any of our hotels, it's an open  
2 invitation, you just let me know.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON WON: To follow up: From yesterday's  
5 visit of the two DocGo sites in my district, we  
6 learned that the hotel DocGo sites will no longer  
7 provide any sort of medical services on site, and to  
8 their contract it says they will have on-site  
9 medical, 12 hours per day, \$250 per hour. So, can  
10 you tell me when this policy was changed, and how the  
11 contract will be amended?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. So, what  
13 we're doing now in in our Downstate hotels, and  
14 actually all of our HERRCs, we're moving to  
15 Telehealth, right? All of our individuals in our  
16 care Downstate, here in the city will have access to  
17 Telehealth when they need it. So, they'll be able to  
18 see somebody. And we actually benefit from one of  
19 the best public health care systems in the world, you  
20 know?, here in New York City.

21 So, we're working closely with H+H. Whenever  
22 anybody needs actual medical care, there are clinics,  
23 urgent care, hospital system that they can get care  
24 from, you know? So we're making sure that they have  
25 access, and we're paying for the transportation. So,

1 we're trying to be thrifty, but we're also making  
2 sure that our clients have-- have the care they need.

3 DR. LONG: Okay. I'd love to jump in on that.

4 We've put, excuse me, a lot of thought into what the  
5 medical needs of asylum seekers are. With our  
6 initial model, one of the key lessons that we've  
7 learned in taking care of asylum seekers is that they  
8 have a tremendous amount of upfront needs. They may  
9 have had chronic diseases that they didn't know  
10 about, or that had gone inadequately treated over  
11 time. When they arrive here in New York City, they  
12 present to us with immediate healthcare needs. So,  
13 at any of our new sites that were opening, new  
14 humanitarian centers, and certainly the arrival  
15 center, we have a concerted effort to continue to  
16 provide health care services for people that are  
17 newly incoming.

18 Over time, the right answer to health care  
19 services has to be that every asylum seeker in New  
20 York City needs to have a doctor like me, a primary  
21 care doctor. So we're making that transition now  
22 towards connecting our asylum seekers into  
23 longitudinal ongoing care.  
24  
25

2 To give some statistics to back that up, just to  
3 point out the immediate need (this still just  
4 overwhelms me), over 36,000-- 36,000 vaccines that  
5 our teams have administered at the arrival center in  
6 our humanitarian centers, just speaking to the  
7 tremendous medical need that people have immediately.  
8 You can't wait to get your MMR and varicella  
9 vaccines, and they are getting it in Texas. We need  
10 to do it here now. We are doing it. It's a human  
11 right, and it's very important.

12 Going beyond there though, our goal now is to  
13 connect people to health insurance. We've connected-  
14 - We've helped 14,000 asylum seekers apply for  
15 health insurance thus far. 14,000. That's 14,000  
16 lives potentially saved. Health insurance is  
17 crucial. Beyond that, too, we've had 29,000 visits  
18 of asylum seekers just at New York City Health +  
19 Hospitals.

20 So you can see the progression there: Addressing  
21 people's immediate needs, and then transitioning them  
22 into our world class primary care system in New York  
23 City Health + Hospitals. And that will be where they  
24 can get a doctor like me, whose name they will know,  
25 that will be their go-to going forward. And that's

1  
2 plugging them into healthcare in the right way for  
3 themselves and their kids longitudinally.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Can you get dental  
5 Telehealth wise?

6 DR. LONG: You can. So dental can be-- Many  
7 dental conditions can be urgent conditions. So we  
8 are-- The answer is: If it's an urgent condition  
9 that the Telehealth doctor or Virtual Express Care  
10 emergency doctor, nurse practitioner, or provider can  
11 handle, they can do it via telehealth. Otherwise,  
12 we've actually already activated our Dental Council  
13 at New York City Health + Hospitals to think about  
14 the right pathways to connect asylum seekers.

15 What Councilmember Brewer is referring to is--

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They all have dental issues.

17 DR. LONG: --we're seeing-- Thank you, you don't  
18 need me to tell you. There are certain issues asylum  
19 seekers have that we want to make sure that we are  
20 immediately addressing. I would say dental is a big  
21 one. Mental health is a huge one.

22 And also, I should say upfront too, all asylum  
23 seekers coming into the arrival center, we don't just  
24 screen you for medical or communicable diseases. We  
25 don't just talk to you about chronic diseases. All

1 asylum seekers 12 and up get screened for depression.  
2 We're seeing a fair amount of depression. And if you  
3 screen positive at a certain level (it's the same  
4 protocol I use in my practice in the Bronx), we have  
5 social workers on site on the second floor that have  
6 an immediate warm handoff and discussion with you.  
7 All that is to make the point for George, that we're  
8 putting the services upfront that we know people need  
9 because they've never gotten them before. And then  
10 we're making a concerted effort, which we've  
11 succeeded with, 14,000 people enrolled in health  
12 insurance, 29,000 completed medical visits at my  
13 clinics alone. That's the direction we're trying to  
14 go in.  
15

16 CHAIRPERSON WON: I just want to put on the  
17 record that for my district (and I followed up with  
18 DocGo directly) that we've had reports from local  
19 clinics that have been referred out from the HERRCs  
20 to them for free instead of to the H+H sites. So I'm  
21 going to continue to keep an eye on that to make sure  
22 that they are being referred to the right places, not  
23 clinics that are not getting funded to do this work.

24 I wanted to further ask questions about the hotel  
25 rooms. So-- And, oh, George, can you confirm that



1 the amendment for the policy change to not have  
2 health care professionals on site was made, and when,  
3 to the contract? When was that amendment made?

4  
5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: So, there was no  
6 change to the contract, right? Like, to the point I  
7 was making with Councilmember Hanif, we're-- we're  
8 instructing them what to do, right? And we're  
9 telling them how to do it. So this is just kind of  
10 an ongoing conversation we've had, and, you know,  
11 we've essentially implemented all the changes that  
12 Dr. Ted talked about.

13 DR. LONG: And just one more point there: Not  
14 only have we gone in the intentional direction of  
15 connecting people to primary care, which I think is  
16 incredibly important, but in addition to that, we've  
17 only done that in terms of transitioning at sites  
18 where people have been for a longer period of time.  
19 And when we make that transition, we intentionally  
20 install Virtual Express Care, which is something that  
21 we developed in New York City Health + Hospitals  
22 during COVID where you can basically, on your phone  
23 or on an iPad, login and have a Telehealth visit as  
24 Councilmember Brewer was referring to with the  
25 provider in a matter of minutes, and they can address

2 an array of conditions. So it's one of those  
3 innovations during COVID that we're able to now use  
4 to help people going forward.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: How much is that contract?

6 DR. LONG: You what?

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: How much is that contract?

8 DR. LONG: That's not a contract. That is New  
9 York City Health + Hospitals doctors.

10 CHAIRPERSON WON: For the-- I want to  
11 acknowledge Comptroller Brad Lander has-- has joined  
12 us. And since the Comptroller's decision to  
13 disapprove the DocGo contract, we've seen many  
14 reports in the news publicly. And one of them is  
15 that the hotel rooms on the DocGo contract are \$170  
16 per room per nights. And we have seen in reports  
17 that they get to keep the profit when it is less than  
18 \$170. Can you comment on that?

19 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Before we do, I just want to  
20 issue my apologies. I have to leave. I have a hard  
21 stop at 2:30 Chris Blanco, who is our agency's Chief  
22 Financial Officer will be taking my seat if the  
23 Committee Counsel wants to swear him in. Also, it is  
24 my understanding, but I will let George speak to  
25 this, that the Comptroller actually did in fact file

1 that contract, the equivalent of registering it and  
2 did approve it. But I will it turn it back over to  
3 you, George. And Chris is going to take my seat.  
4 Thank you.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON WON: And the Comptroller will be  
7 testifying as well.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: To the question  
9 about Hotelling and the cost in our DocGo contract.  
10 So \$170 is-- is the rate that we landed in our  
11 contract. And just to be clear about that, that  
12 that's \$170 per room per night, both Upstate and  
13 Downstate. So Upstate, we have 13 hotels, Downstate,  
14 we have 15 hotels, right? And so we landed on that  
15 number, you know, based on some comps we looked at,  
16 and it's an issue of predictability. We needed to  
17 budget and know how much money we have in our budget,  
18 ensure we had enough money in our budget, because  
19 it's the-- it's the largest cost that we bear,  
20 right?, the hoteling cost. So it was-- it was an  
21 issue of predictability to make sure we had enough  
22 money in our budget. And I can tell you for a fact  
23 the Downstate hotels, particularly this past summer,  
24 were all more than \$170, Councilmember Won. And, so  
25 it averaged out is what we're trying to tell you,

2 right? All the Downstate hotels are expensive, the  
3 Upstate hotels, sure, are cheaper. \$170 is kind of a  
4 middle ground.

5 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay, because \$170 per night  
6 per hotel room-- many like the one in my district is  
7 very small, that's \$5,100 per month for these  
8 families. That's enough for me to get them a nice  
9 luxury rental with a doorman and a pool my district.  
10 So I look forward to listening to the long-term plans  
11 for housing these folks.

12 I'm going to turn it over to Councilmember  
13 Williams to ask her questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And also Councilmember  
15 Krisnan has joined us. And after Williams is  
16 Councilmember Joseph.

17 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you chairs. I  
18 know the Commissioner left, but I just wanted to say  
19 that I'm offended and also confused by the very broad  
20 characterization of the Council, that we are  
21 purposely trying to spread misinformation. The  
22 Council is not a monolith. There's 51 of us. I  
23 can't speak for my colleagues. But it's very  
24 offensive to hear folks say that to us when I know  
25 central staff, I know individually, we've asked the

2 administration for information. We can't know  
3 something if we're not told. And so we rely on  
4 sometimes the media, what we hear, what we see from  
5 providers, what information we can scrape up from  
6 FOIA documents that you guys redact and other public  
7 information.

8 So, I really just wanted to say that, and just  
9 the notion that it's unfair for us to question and  
10 try to seek out these answers that we've asked off  
11 the record and are now asking on the record. So I'm  
12 just-- I really felt the need to say that I'm both  
13 offended and very confused by those comments.  
14 Because what's really unfair is that there are a lot  
15 of people that actually want to work with the  
16 Administration in partnership, and want to have the  
17 information to properly assess and go back to our  
18 communities to stop the rumors, because we know how  
19 dangerous that can be.

20 So, my first question is-- I know you all spoke  
21 about the pre-approvals for contracts. I just had a  
22 clarifying question, because I know sometimes  
23 agencies will have RFPs out for pre-approvals. They  
24 may not call you right away, but if something  
25 happens, they can go from a list, which tends to

1 shorten the procurement process. So, I just wanted  
2 to know-- I've heard you guys say pre-approvals a  
3 few times. So, I just wanted to know if the pre-  
4 approvals list was a list that you already had, or  
5 was it a new list? Are you working off of a list?

6  
7 The next question that I have is: If you could  
8 just give me some details on how each of your  
9 respective agencies are providing oversight of  
10 current facilities to ensure that issues are  
11 addressed in expedience. I know there has been  
12 reports of inadequate resources, services, leaks,  
13 physical issues.

14 I wanted to also know the coordination between  
15 the agencies and your coordination with other  
16 jurisdictions. I have some friends in other  
17 jurisdictions, and I've heard quite a few horror  
18 stories about the lack of coordination from the City  
19 and their respective counties in welcoming people.

20 And last but not least, in my district, I have  
21 the central library, and they are very happy to  
22 welcome folks who are trying to get IDNYC, and  
23 they've been doing really good, with partnering with  
24 them and HRA. But I have heard and seen that at 4 or  
25 5 a.m., people are lining up around the block to get

3 the services. And so just wondering what support we  
4 can offer, and if you have any future RFPs that  
5 really seek to address some of the service gaps.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. BLANCO: If I can just respond to your  
8 initial comment before passing it over my colleagues  
9 here. I don't think the Commissioner was-- was  
10 trying to imply that there are specific, you know,  
11 attempts by the Council to confuse people. I don't  
12 think that's the case at all. I think the-- the  
13 point he was trying to make is that this is all very,  
14 very complicated, right?, and I think we everyone  
15 here acknowledges that. There's a lot of agencies  
16 involved. There's a lot of work involved. And just  
17 the sheer size of the response to asylum seekers is  
18 tremendous and a huge drain on the city's resources.

19 I think what we, as an administration-- I think  
20 we share a lot of, sort of, the same feelings that  
21 you have as well, right?, which is-- it's  
22 complicated, right? There's, I think, a lot of bad-  
23 faith assumptions that people aren't doing things, or  
24 aren't trying to do things. I don't think anyone  
25 pretends that everything is perfect here. But I  
think what we, as an administration feel and see,

1 right?, is that it is a very complicated, complex  
2 response. It's a complex national issue across the  
3 board. So before that-- before sort of attacking us  
4 for saying that we're not doing something, I think a  
5 lot of the times, the goal here is for us to try to  
6 unpack how things were--  
7

8 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: I'm sorry. I really was  
9 going to let you speak. But I think-- I think just  
10 as Commissioner felt like there was some  
11 misunderstanding-- misunderstanding, I think you all  
12 have misunderstandings as well. I think you confuse  
13 attack with our obligations to provide oversight.

14 And so again, I cannot speak for my colleagues  
15 and I really just don't want to waste anyone's time,  
16 so we can just jump into the questions. I appreciate  
17 you trying to respond to my comment. It wasn't  
18 necessary. I just wanted to state for the record  
19 that I personally am offended and quite confused by  
20 the comments. And asking questions isn't to attack.  
21 It is to find the accurate information that we were  
22 accused of not having.

23 MR. BLANCO: Thank you, Councilmember.

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: Councilmember, I'm happy to  
25 jump in and start with the with the questions. I



2 think we're all going to have different answers about  
3 PQLs, about pre-qualified lists. So, I'll start, and  
4 then I will also address the IDNYC lines.

5 So at DHS and DSS, we don't have any pre-  
6 qualified lists. So, we did an RFP from scratch for  
7 the sanctuary-- for our sanctuary sites. I think the  
8 the pre-approvals that we were referencing was-- we  
9 were able to clear some pieces of the approval  
10 process that are on the normal contracting piece so  
11 that we could move the process more quickly. But the  
12 vendors that we're working with were selected  
13 specifically for the purpose here. Again, different  
14 agencies may have different answers.

15 IDNYC is-- is within our space, there has been a  
16 tremendous demand for IDNYC. We don't specifically  
17 track documentation status of those applying, and  
18 that's very intentional, because we don't want to--  
19 to have that record available for others. But what I  
20 know is that we saw almost twice as many applications  
21 in calendar year 22, as calendar year 21, which we  
22 can-- we certainly attribute to the asylum seekers.

23 We are hiring within the IDNYC space. We've  
24 added staff. We are-- and we are working very  
25 closely with, with my colleagues here, to make sure

1 that we are-- are streamlining the process as much as  
2 possible. Early on in this we added different forms  
3 of documentation that would count as ID points for  
4 IDNYC. One of the things that we've learned recently  
5 was that people were getting rejected because they  
6 were putting down a variety of addresses that weren't  
7 residential addresses on their application. So,  
8 we've been working really closely with-- with H+H to  
9 make sure that we are able to give people a  
10 centralized address so that no matter what, they can  
11 apply. So that's still a work in progress, but we  
12 realize how important it is, and so we're looking for  
13 ways to streamline.  
14

15 And then I guess, to, to speak to agency  
16 coordination, you know, I text with this group a lot.  
17 So that's-- I mean, there is-- there is a lot of  
18 very personal coordination. There's also-- City  
19 Hall is playing a really active and aggressive role  
20 and making sure that we are all talking, whether that  
21 is standing phone calls, sharing reports. It has  
22 certainly been iterative. You know, this is an  
23 evolving process. There have been moments where it  
24 isn't perfect, but I do think that we've built  
25 really, really strong interagency relationships.

1  
2 And, you know, I know I can go to anybody on this  
3 panel in a heartbeat, and they come to me. So, you  
4 know, although it is-- is not perfect, it is very  
5 strong.

6 DR. LONG: That's important. And just to give an  
7 example that too: City Hall does provide a really  
8 critical, coordinated effort across everything that  
9 we're doing, including at 9:30pm last night, when we  
10 had a meeting about the exciting news for Temporary  
11 Protected Status for Venezuelans.

12 To answer your specific questions, I think for  
13 the pre-qual, Charles and Chris, maybe you guys might  
14 want to share some thoughts on that. And then maybe  
15 we can quickly go over-- to your oversight question,  
16 because I think George was sharing earlier that he  
17 has a new oversight unit that he's developing.

18 MR. DIAMOND: Yeah. I would quickly say in terms  
19 of pre-- the use of pre-qualification lists,  
20 Councilmember, an agency can use a pre-qual within an  
21 emergency, they can use a standard pre-qualification  
22 list to respond to an emergency. And of course, you  
23 used the phrase prior-- kind of prior approval. That  
24 also triggers what we talk about when we talk about  
25 the Comptroller's prior approval.

2 So it could mean any of those. I just wanted to  
3 clarify that you certainly could use a PQL in that  
4 instance, like I believe HPD does on occasion. I'll  
5 turn it back over to George.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. And just  
7 on the question of oversight, you know, it's  
8 something we always take seriously. It's easier to  
9 do when you're down here in the city than in Buffalo,  
10 New York, right? And we actually rely on a lot of  
11 our partners Upstate to provide us feedback that we  
12 kind of incorporate into operations and make the  
13 tweaks we need to make. But like Dr. Ted Long was  
14 saying, we're actually setting up a new team, right?,  
15 with dedicated staff to give us greater visibility  
16 into the sites, Up state in particular. So that's  
17 something that we're in the process of doing.

18 COMMISSIONER PARK: I missed-- I missed the  
19 oversight question. Apologies. So, our standard  
20 structure within the Department of Homeless Services,  
21 which we've expanded to include the asylum sites as  
22 well, we have assistant commissioners-- reporting to  
23 the assistant commissioners are what we call program  
24 administrators, and then they have program analysts  
25 reporting to them.

3 So, the program analysts can be out in the field.  
4 They can have eyes on what's going on. The program  
5 administrators are also out in the field, although  
6 they have a larger portfolio. And then they report  
7 up to the assistant commissioner.

8 So, we have eyes on the ground and a clear  
9 escalation path so that if there are issues. But  
10 certainly, you know, we-- we have an ombudsman, so  
11 that clients can report issues directly to us, so  
12 that those get to us. And to the extent that you  
13 know, we miss things because things can happen, we  
14 certainly appreciate feedback from you and your  
15 colleagues.

16 DR. LONG: And just to quickly go over the H+H  
17 oversight process. So, our sites are larger. So, I  
18 have 15 Humanitarian Centers and the Arrival Center,  
19 and we run them like a hospital. In a hospital,  
20 there has to be one person in charge, that's the CEO.  
21 So at each of my sites, I have a supervisor, an  
22 administrator that are actually physically on site in  
23 charge of all the different services, whether it's  
24 medical, food, laundry, security, you name it, all  
25 the services roll up to my supervisor and  
administrator, and they're in charge of all

2 operations on site around the clock. Any issues that  
3 come up, they're the ones that deal with it.

4 So at H+H, we are-- we are in charge of all of  
5 our sites with on-site staff.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Councilmember Joseph? Oh--

7 COUNSEL: Before we move to Councilmember Joseph,  
8 I just need to swear in Mr. Blanco from NYCEM. Can  
9 you please raise your right hand?

10 Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the  
11 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your  
12 response to Councilmember questions?

13 MR. BLANCO: I do.

14 COUNSEL: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Councilmember Joseph, and  
16 then Councilmember Vernikov.

17 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you  
18 chairs. I just have a few questions around the  
19 hotels. How do you decide where you're going to  
20 place a hotel? For example, you placed a hotel in my  
21 district. I got a call. I knew about it. I visited  
22 it. Good.

23 There's another hotel that was contracted in my  
24 district. No one told me until I was walking down in  
25

2 the district and I saw the folks sitting outside, and  
3 they stumbled into my office looking for services.

4 How do you choose the sites? And how come the  
5 local councilmembers are not made aware of these  
6 hotels opening? Not that we have a problem, but  
7 maybe we can better coordinate and partnership? How  
8 I found out: I'm also the Education Chair.

9 Principals are calling me. "Councilmember, I've got  
10 a 15 people standing in front of me right now." And  
11 that was a school in my district. Fifteen families  
12 standing, no-- no support. No one picked up the  
13 phone and said, "Councilmember? Please support."

14 How can I offer support? How can we do this  
15 better?

16 And I'm also getting a lot of phone calls from  
17 parents when children-- You have 60,000 asylum  
18 seekers in your care. How many of them are children?  
19 Have they been vaccinated? That's what some of my  
20 families have been asking.

21 Also, what's the percentage on communicable  
22 disease outbreaks? They want to know that.

23 How are we treating our migrant-- our new New  
24 Yorkers, our families?

1  
2           So those are very important questions. And  
3 moving forward, I would love better communication  
4 between the agencies also with the local  
5 councilmembers. I shouldn't have to walk down  
6 Flatbush to see families sitting outside, or someone  
7 shouldn't have to stumble into my office to say,  
8 "Hey, could you get us to the next pantry?" And I'll  
9 pick up the phone and be like, "This is where the  
10 next pantry is."

11           The summer school-- For example, summer school  
12 program was feeding students up until September.  
13 That should have been announced in all of the  
14 shelters. That was not. I had to pick up the phone  
15 and call New York City Public Schools, and said,  
16 "That-- That announcement should have been made to  
17 families," to let them know their resources. Because  
18 in the hotel, I know there's a mini fridge and  
19 there's a microwave, there is no food, and there's no  
20 way they can cook food. So I need to know, moving  
21 forward, as of today, how we're going to look on  
22 community engagement with the local community and the  
23 local councilmembers.

24           We've been doing this. Principals shouldn't have  
25 to call me. We were on the ground from day one.



2 When we got those families, food-- food distribution  
3 was done, coats were ready, backpacks and supplies--  
4 all of that was done.

5 We're here as my councilmember said to be  
6 partners, but we want to be good partners. But if  
7 you're not communicating with us, I won't know if a  
8 tree falls in the forest, I don't know it falls  
9 unless you tell me.

10 COMMISSIONER PARK: Understood. Thank you,  
11 Councilmember. Let me-- let me start, and then my  
12 colleagues can chime in. We have a lot of the hotels  
13 at DSS, but not-- not all of the hotels.

14 So we-- In terms of how we site, and how we  
15 select, we are in constant negotiations with hotels.  
16 We are looking for sites that have sort of a critical  
17 mass of-- of rooms, right? There are a handful of  
18 boutique hotels that, you know, if it's 20 units, it  
19 probably doesn't make sense for us, because it's just  
20 very-- very challenging to operate.

21 On the converse, if it's too large, that's very  
22 difficult for DSS as well. So we're looking for  
23 moderate-sized hotels where we can negotiate a  
24 reasonable rate. It's very important that we're  
25 providing, you know, services and-- and shelter for

2 everybody who needs it. But we also want to make  
3 sure we're being responsible with city resources.

4 So that is-- that is the "how do we find them":  
5 Ongoing negotiation. It is standard DHS policy, DSS  
6 policy to-- to notify the Councilmember. In the case  
7 of these emergencies, sometimes it is very, very  
8 short notice. And if we have been moving very  
9 quickly, in some cases. If we have missed some, I  
10 apologize, and we will focus on making sure that we  
11 are doing better.

12 I do want to clarify: All of our sites, any  
13 hotel, or any other shelter where there are not  
14 cooking facilities for the clients, everybody is  
15 provided with three meals a day. So that doesn't  
16 mean that they might not sometimes use-- use pantries  
17 and other resources in the neighborhood, but I just  
18 want to be clear on the record that there are meals,  
19 there's food provided around the clock. People have  
20 access to milk, other kinds of things.

21 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Are they culturally  
22 relevant?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sorry?

24 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Are they culturally  
25 relevant?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: So we are-- We're working  
3 with a variety of food vendors. Our providers are  
4 working with a variety of food vendors. We are  
5 serving so many different cultures at this point.  
6 Many of the asylum seekers are coming from-- from  
7 South and Latin America. But we're also serving  
8 people from Western Africa, from-- increasingly from  
9 Ukraine and other Russian-speaking-- and Russian-  
10 speaking countries. So "culturally relevant" means a  
11 lot of different things to a lot of different people.  
12 So there's, um, there's a variety of food provided  
13 within the shelters. I am sure it is not exactly  
14 what everybody would pick at all times. But we are  
15 sure that-- We are confident that there is food that  
16 meets the New York City standards. It's available.  
17 There's fruit and other kinds of snacks that are  
18 available around the clock.

19 But again, coordination with-- with you, with--  
20 and with your colleagues is really important to us,  
21 and we are happy to look at ways that we can do it  
22 better.

23 DR. LONG: And if I can jump in. So actually, I  
24 want to make sure we answered all of your questions.

1 I promise I'll be my less-verbose self, but I wrote  
2 down all your questions.  
3

4 So your first was the number of children. I'll  
5 answer on-- from the point of view of my H+H HERRCs.  
6 The specific numbers are, we have-- of a denominator  
7 of about 20,000 people currently at H+H HERRCs today,  
8 about 2300 or under 5, 5 to 17 is about 4300. And  
9 then the rest are above that. So there's specific  
10 numbers.

11 Your second was around vaccines and communicable  
12 disease screening and care. So, for vaccines, I'm  
13 really proud of the fact that we vaccinate-- we have  
14 administered nearly 37,000 vaccines at the Arrival  
15 Center, and at my Humanitarian Centers thus far in  
16 the crisis. The way it works now-- Because we're  
17 still seeing a tremendous need for this. So, the way  
18 it works now is all asylum seekers are intended to  
19 come through the front door of the Roosevelt Hotel,  
20 our Arrival Center, and then when you're waiting to  
21 go through intake, I have a roving series of teams  
22 that come up and offer you and your family vaccines.  
23 People are not reticent about vaccines, they just  
24 literally haven't had access to them before. Either  
25 they were too expensive investment Venezuela,

1  
2 Colombia, or Ecuador, or they just hadn't seen a  
3 doctor before.

4 A crazy example of not having seen doctor before  
5 is three days ago, we had a woman that came in was  
6 going through our medical part of our intake. And  
7 she received her first prenatal visit from us and she  
8 was nine months pregnant. So she'd never seen doctor  
9 before.

10 So just to point out: People have not gotten the  
11 care that they deserve before they get here, but  
12 37,000 vaccines administered.

13 For communicable disease screening. We also--  
14 That's the first thing we do at the Arrival Centers,  
15 is we screen for active tuberculosis, varicella or  
16 chickenpox, which is not endemic to countries people  
17 are coming from. So we do a full body skin exam,  
18 because they're at very high risk for contracting it,  
19 because their body hasn't seen it before. And also  
20 COVID as well. Varicella, by the way to your point,  
21 the reason we're testing we're doing a screen for  
22 that is because we saw cases initially. So now we're  
23 seeing who has it now, they immediately get isolated  
24 if they have that rash, and then we have the  
25 opportunity if it's in the right window to give a

1 prophylactic vaccine to those that may have been  
2 exposed to them.  
3

4       The most common vaccines that are given by the  
5 way are varicella and MMR, which is just  
6 heartbreaking that we're giving having to vaccinate  
7 kids, sometimes older kids for things that could kill  
8 them like measles, which everybody in the US has  
9 received. So, we do better by people when they get  
10 here.

11       Your last question was about the culturally-  
12 relevant food. One thing we do at all of our  
13 Humanitarian Centers and the Arrival Center is 100%  
14 of our food is halal. Just as an example, when we  
15 started to see Muslim guests, initially, we had a  
16 food truck, but that was only a temporary solution.  
17 And then we just figured it'd be easier to make sure  
18 that people didn't have to choose between different  
19 food options, they could know that all food was  
20 culturally appropriate for them.

21       Then I won't tell my story about this, but then  
22 after that we did a campaign to have people evaluate  
23 meals, because we had this interesting problem of  
24 "What meals do people from Senegal and Venezuela both  
25 like?" And there is an answer to that question, but

1  
2 you only know if you ask people and have them rate  
3 the individual meals. And the answer is Italian  
4 food.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: From HPD's  
6 perspective, in terms of like site selection, hotel  
7 site selection, you know, the-- the criteria  
8 Commissioner Park rattled off is our criteria too,  
9 right? In terms of protocols and outreach, that's  
10 exactly what we're supposed to do.

11 So first, it'll be helpful if maybe you can tell  
12 us where this hotel is. So between the three of us,  
13 we could tell you who you need to reach out to if you  
14 ever have a problem. That would be helpful. I know  
15 sometimes the outreach doesn't work. I know for  
16 Councilmember Won, we had a hotel that we stood up in  
17 her district, and we didn't make the connection. So  
18 that's on us. And we've got to do better. So let us  
19 know where it is, we'll do better, we'll reach out to  
20 you and, you know, you'll have a point of contact at  
21 the very least that you can reach out to if you have  
22 issues.

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: Also, if you want to just  
24 send any one of us, we'll sort it out on the back.

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Sure. You can  
3 do that too. Yeah.

4 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: I sure will. All right.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Councilmember Vernikov?

6 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you chairs.

7 First, I'd like to just clarify how many emergency  
8 contracts which provides services to migrants have  
9 been executed since October 7, 2022, when the mayor  
10 declared a state of emergency?

11 MR. DIAMOND: So, thank you, Councilmember. In  
12 terms of contracts to respond to the emergency (and I  
13 would clarify in that way) we're looking at-- at  
14 about 205. It is changing every day, but we're  
15 looking at about 205 contract actions. The-- the  
16 reason I caveated myself, Councilmember, is because  
17 (as Commissioner Park spoke well about) a lot of this  
18 response to an emergency, it can be an amendment to  
19 an existing contract that you're leveraging, it can  
20 be an emerg-- it can be a full emergency contract.  
21 In some cases, we've done full RFPs, full bids to  
22 respond to it.

23 So I would classify this as-- these are the  
24 contracts that we're tracking as our response to the  
25 emergency. They aren't all going to be procured



2 through the emergency method. So we would say about  
3 205 contracts.

4 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, thank you. And  
5 what's the total cost these contracts add up to? Do  
6 you know?

7 MR. DIAMOND: So in terms of the costs, I will  
8 defer to the testimony that I believe George gave. I  
9 think it was \$2.08 billion of the estimated costs. I  
10 think it's important to note here: The cost and the  
11 contract value-- So the contract value for that  
12 amount will not be that same amount. And there's a  
13 few reasons for that. I referenced-- On a base  
14 level, of course, an agency might not spend that full  
15 amount. That's its maximum. That's what their  
16 maximum that they could spend. But also, if there's  
17 a leverage contract-- all right. So you have a  
18 contract where, "This is what I need to do, but I  
19 don't have the scope, I don't have the money in there  
20 to do it, I need to amend it. I need to add that to  
21 it." So if we add the entire max to that number,  
22 you're going to be capturing a lot of things. So  
23 that number that George was able to provide from OMB,  
24 I think is-- is by far the most accurate number in  
25 terms of our costs right now.

2 In terms of contract value, I find it both under-  
3 inclusive and over-inclusive, because it's both  
4 failing to capture, and capturing more than it  
5 should. So, I would defer to the number that George  
6 testified to.

7 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, thank you. And  
8 how many of these contracts are with for-profit  
9 vendors?

10 MR. DIAMOND: I don't have that exact data before  
11 me, Councilmember. I'd be happy to follow up on the  
12 exact amount. I would note, I think, as Commissioner  
13 Park spoke, about 127 of these, or around there, are  
14 with DSS. Now of course-- So I think that gives you  
15 a good example. DSS their-- their program is based  
16 with nonprofits.

17 So the vast majority of these contracts are  
18 through DSS. I don't have an exact number on the  
19 business organization type. But I think that's a-- a  
20 helpful guide.

21 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: So it's about 127?

22 MR. DIAMOND: It's certainly over half. I'll  
23 have to get-- get back to you with specific numbers.

24 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: So over half. Okay.

2 And so why were for profit vendors without  
3 experience selected, versus those vendors who have  
4 experience running shelters?

5 MR. DIAMOND: So in terms of any contract  
6 decisions, I'll turn it over to the to the procuring  
7 agencies.

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: So let me just clarify, I  
9 think we may have got-- flipped the numbers there.  
10 The 127 that were referenced, those are DSS  
11 contracts. And those are-- those are almost  
12 exclusively with not-for-profits. So I just-- I  
13 couldn't hear. It sounded like maybe we heard-- we  
14 were interpreting the 127 as for-profit.

15 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: So we can assume the  
16 rest of for-profits?

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: Uh, no. Not necessarily. I  
18 think we're-- we're-- as Charles said, we'll get back  
19 to you on the split. But I just wanted to clarify  
20 that the DSS contracts are largely with nonprofits.

21 With the for-profit contracts, sort of across the  
22 board, there's going to be a mix of vendors that are  
23 doing exactly the work that is squarely within their  
24 wheelhouse, right? So, if we are contracting at--  
25 These actually probably are not in the number because

1 we're leveraging our existing contracts, but we have  
2 three contracts with food vendors. They're for  
3 profits, right? They're-- They're companies that--  
4 that provide bulk meals. That is exactly what they  
5 do. It's what they've done for us for many years.  
6 They are for-profit companies. In other cases, you  
7 have-- there are instances where we're working with  
8 organizations that have stepped outside a little bit,  
9 because we are working in such an unprecedented  
10 space. But I'll let my colleagues chime in.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. Just, you  
13 know, from HPDs perspective, you know, we have  
14 contracted with for-profit companies that just have  
15 an expertise that we needed based on the programmatic  
16 objectives that we needed to achieve, you know? So  
17 for the kind of Upstate program, you know, it is a  
18 program where we--

19 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: I'm sorry, the expertise  
20 to service migrant communities?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, the  
22 expertise to stand up shelters quickly in places that  
23 we've never been, you know? And so, with DocGo, they  
24 have this expertise, this, like, logistical  
25 expertise, this ability to mobilize quickly, hire

1 staff quickly, stand up an operation in a short  
2 amount of time.  
3

4 And then they subcontract with a bunch of  
5 different entities. Some of them are for-profit, to  
6 Commissioner Park's point. Our food vendors are  
7 often for-profit. The security firms are for-profit.  
8 The laundry firms are for-profit. But a lot of the  
9 case management and social work are subcontracted to  
10 nonprofits.

11 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, thank you. And  
12 speaking of DocGo, can you just tell us what were the  
13 specific reasons or criteria that led to the  
14 selection of DocGo, specifically?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Sure. So we  
16 selected DocGo, because they have this experience  
17 that we know about, because, you know, they are a  
18 contractor for the City of New York, particularly  
19 H+H, as Dr. Long mentioned earlier, that's done a lot  
20 of this type of work in the past, where, you know,  
21 for testing, for test and trace, for setting up, you  
22 know-- for setting up essentially vaccination  
23 centers, for setting up testing centers, for doing  
24 all that, and pushing into various different  
25 communities, hiring a bunch of people and operating

2 very quickly, and mobilizing, this-- they have a  
3 history with us doing that. So, we were familiar  
4 with them operationally.

5 So, when we reached out to them, that that's why  
6 we reached out to them: For this specific objective  
7 Upstate.

8 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: And so were any  
9 alternative providers considered.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. So at the  
11 moment when we when we contracted with DocGo (this  
12 was again back in spring 2023), we reached out to our  
13 sister agencies to figure out who's-- who's able to  
14 do this work in-- in New York City and Upstate,  
15 right? So, we met a lot of different entities very  
16 quickly, in a matter of days, that provide a lot of  
17 the services. From the DHS folks that do this type  
18 of work, we're all kind of tapped out, you know?  
19 They were at capacity. These are a lot of the  
20 nonprofit providers that Commissioner Park told you  
21 about a little moment ago. And we reached out to H+H  
22 as well, and they had a few vendors that they were  
23 working with. We met a lot of them tried to  
24 understand what they're capable of doing, and when  
25

2 they're able to do it, what kind of capacity they  
3 had. And so we chose DocGo through that process.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We're going to go to the  
5 next Councilmember. Do you have more questions,  
6 or...?

7 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Yeah, just--

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quickly. Go ahead, because  
9 we're trying to be fair, but one more.

10 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: I think, uh, Chairwoman,  
11 Councilmember Yeger gave me two minutes of his time.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go ahead. Go ahead.

13 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you.

14 Um, can you just tell us what type of services  
15 are provided by the DocGo contract?

16 DR. LONG: Can I-- Can I start with that? Just I  
17 think you're getting to an important point. I just  
18 wanted to clarify in terms of how we use our vendors  
19 on the-- at our H+H sites.

20 So, we again break down the different services,  
21 we have. One service is intake. You need to have  
22 somebody to check in people as they're arriving, food  
23 security, laundry, cleaning, the rooms, medical, you  
24 know, a variety of things.

1  
2           And we-- we've used DocGo to provide intake and  
3 some services like that. But I just wanted to--  
4 because I don't think I've said this so far in the  
5 hearing: DocGo is not the only vendor that we use to  
6 provide those services. We have other vendors like  
7 MedRite that are able to scale to the capacity that  
8 we need them to at the speed that we need them to,  
9 and provide services that they've shown that they are  
10 able to provide at our site with our oversight.

11           So I just wanted to-- I didn't want to leave the  
12 impression that DocGo, for example, across our city  
13 sites was the only vendor providing these types of  
14 specific services.

15           COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, thank you. So,  
16 can you just clarify what services are provided by  
17 the DocGo contract specifically?

18           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: So, for the  
19 DocGo contract with HPD, specifically for the Upstate  
20 Hotelling program, I'll rattle off those services.  
21 So, they're the exact same services that we provide  
22 at our HERRCs down here in New York City. So they're  
23 required to provide shelter, food, laundry, case  
24 management, and social work. So, the exact same  
25 services that are provided here are provided up



2 there. So, like I mentioned, they subcontract a lot  
3 of that work to folks that have that expertise in  
4 the-- in the communities where they set up shop.

5 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: So how much is spent on  
6 shelter?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: So shelter is  
8 probably one of our largest services. Give me one  
9 second to see if we have that breakdown.

10 Um, let me-- Can I follow up with you on that?  
11 It is our largest line item though.

12 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Yes. And how about on  
13 food?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Sorry?

15 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: How about on food?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: I will follow up  
17 with you on each line item after this hearing.

18 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Add the bus to it, too.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: The bus? Sorry.  
21 So the transportation is part of the DocGo suite of  
22 services.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I know.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: And what we've  
25 actually done-- What we've actually done over the

2 last month-- We've heard a lot of feedback from our  
3 Upstate partners about clients who are trying to get  
4 to appointments, legal service appointments, medical  
5 appointments, and you're using the DocGo shuttles,  
6 right? And the way the shuttles work in some of our  
7 Upstate communities, they do big loops, you know?  
8 And sometimes the loops take two to three hours. So  
9 you could be done with a medical appointment in 30  
10 minutes, and you're waiting for the same shuttle to  
11 take you back home, right? So, what we've done now  
12 is we've switched from the shuttle service to more of  
13 a metro transit service. So, what we're doing in our  
14 Upstate communities like Albany, Rochester, Buffalo,  
15 we're giving our asylum seekers MetroCards, bus  
16 passes.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They hardly have buses that  
18 come any faster than the shuttles that you just  
19 described.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Well, there's  
21 predictability, at least, to it.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. All right. I just--

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: There's a  
24 schedule, and they can choose when they come, and  
25 they can choose when they go.

2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: When was the last time you  
3 were in Rochester?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: When was last  
5 time I was in Rochester?

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'm just saying. Okay,  
7 thank you.

8 Councilmember Ariola?

9 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you Chairs. Thank  
10 you all for testifying today. Before a Commissioner  
11 Iscol left. He mentioned that DocGo was registered,  
12 and he said he-- it was-- it was registered and filed  
13 with the Comptroller's office. Was there also  
14 discussion with the Comptroller's office prior to  
15 that registration and filing?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: So before--  
17 Like, we-- we had to actually check in with the  
18 Comptroller's office before we could move forward  
19 with the contract, period, right? And so we got a  
20 letter from the Comptroller. He had some concerns.  
21 We responded to that letter and addressed his  
22 concerns in a letter from my Commissioner to the  
23 comptroller. And we're obviously going to have a  
24 very close relationship with control over the next  
25 few months, you know, as he audits this contract.

1  
2 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you. Mr. Blanco,  
3 so, we've talked a lot about contracts that are  
4 failing, but I'm sure there are other contracts that  
5 are very successful. Would you like to speak to  
6 those contracts and what measures NYCEM has put in  
7 place so they can better assess when awarding  
8 contracts?

9 MR. BLANCO: Sure, thank you for your question,  
10 Councilmember. It might be helpful for us to maybe  
11 just take a step back and talk about sort of the  
12 respite center operation that NYCEM runs, which is I  
13 think is vastly different than the HERRCs and the  
14 others, the DHS and HPD systems.

15 So when we're talking about the respite centers,  
16 we're really talking about this sort of short-term  
17 sheltering operation at various places throughout the  
18 city. You know, NYCEM is responsible for providing  
19 rent. It's really providing a roof and three meals a  
20 day to folks. So really the basic services that  
21 folks need to survive. So, again rent, we provide  
22 staffing for all of the sites in conjunction with  
23 H+H. So that provides security, fire guards, front-  
24 end staffing for intake. We provide all the supplies  
25 and equipment for the initial setup of the sites,

2 right? And so that's anywhere from cots, to snacks,  
3 to any sort of hygiene needs that folks need, so  
4 shampoo, et cetera. We also provide work around  
5 basic cleaning and maintenance of the facilities.  
6 And so as folks can imagine, for a lot of these  
7 sites, a lot of them are maybe not in the best state  
8 of repair. And so there's constant need to sort of  
9 clean up, as well as to maintain the facilities.

10 I think, again, we have a lot of success as far  
11 as the vendors that are providing services at our  
12 sites. Again, we have constant check ins with our  
13 partners here at this table, right?, because it is a  
14 whole city approach. We're utilizing both our  
15 vendors as well as H+H's vendors for a variety of the  
16 services. I think we have two daily site check-ins,  
17 one in the morning and one in the evening. We have  
18 an agency leadership check in first thing in the  
19 morning after the site check ins.

20 And so with regards to the vendors that we've had  
21 at our sites, through H+H's contracts, for instance,  
22 Rethink and Long Island Com, who does food services,  
23 and we've had a very sort of strong track record of  
24 success. They've been delivering high quality food  
25

2 services. They've been responsive to any sort of our  
3 needs and concerns.

4 As we said before, like, we take all of our  
5 incident reports very seriously. We're monitoring  
6 constantly all of our vendors, and we have regular  
7 check ins with all of our vendors as well as with H+H  
8 who oversees a large number of our contracts. And  
9 so, yeah, I mean, I think with regards to just the  
10 performance of the vendors at our sites, again, like  
11 a strong track record in providing security services  
12 in food, as well as just again, a lot of the work  
13 that's being done to just maintain the facilities, a  
14 lot of cleaning, a lot of work that's being done to  
15 repair plumbing and heating and all sorts of issues.

16 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Mr. Blanco--

17 DR. LONG: I think, Councilmember, can-- Oh,  
18 sorry.

19 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Mr. Blanco, we were told  
20 that a lot of the respite centers will be closing  
21 down. How many respite centers across the city will  
22 be closing down?

23 MR. BLANCO: I don't have that figure right now.  
24 What I can say is, I think I think at our peak, we  
25 were at 16 respite centers. I think currently we're

1 at 12. We closed the two sites recently at the  
2 McCarren Park Recreation Center and Sunset Park.  
3 Again, we're evaluating the entire system as a whole,  
4 to understand sort of which are the most efficient  
5 and which are-- which are the least efficient. I  
6 think, particularly as we stand up additional sites,  
7 whether that's through HERRCs, whether it's through  
8 these new sites from the federal government, you  
9 know, it's really going to be dependent upon how the  
10 system, sort of-- the needs sort of grow throughout  
11 the system, right? As folks have been aware, there's  
12 been a huge increase in the last few weeks of the  
13 folks that we're seeing. I think there was an  
14 article yesterday about the number of folks that  
15 crossed the border. And we anticipate that to  
16 increase the number of people that we're receiving.  
17 So, it's really going to be dependent upon what we're  
18 seeing as far as arrivals, as well as the other  
19 expansions and contractions throughout the system.

21 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: And out of your sites, how  
22 are you evaluating which ones to shut down?

23 MR. BLANCO: We're working with city hall to sort  
24 of understand, sort of, costs throughout all of our  
25 systems. And so working closely with OMB and the

2 Office of Asylum Seekers, we're working to just  
3 understand, you know, what are the needs that we're  
4 seeing?

5 I think, particularly as with regards to our  
6 systems, right?, as I mentioned before, it's fairly  
7 bare bones. I think with regards to the changing of  
8 seasons, that's a big concern for us, preparing for  
9 winter. And so viability for us is looking at what  
10 are the new needs that are emerging every day, as  
11 we're seeing the change in season, the change in  
12 arrivals, just the change in the needs of the  
13 populations that we're serving.

14 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay, we're going to turn it  
15 over to--

16 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Just-- No. I really  
17 hadn't finished my questioning. I'm sorry, Chairs.

18 CHAIRPERSON WON: Oh, we're going to come back,  
19 because we have second rounds for folks.

20 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: No, but this was still  
21 part of my first round. I just kind of got hijacked.

22 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay.

23 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Yeah, I just have a  
24 question. So there's been a lot of discussion about  
25 the lease signing at Floyd Bennett Field. What is



2 the plan that you have for services, and those  
3 services that will be contracted? And who would they  
4 be contracted to if that particular site opens as a  
5 center for however many single men migrants?

6 MR. BLANCO: Um, we're still evaluating that.  
7 You know, I know it's a-- it's a big site that's  
8 currently under discussion with the federal  
9 government. So we're currently evaluating what works  
10 best at that site and for that neighborhood.

11 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: So there's no plan in  
12 place right now? We're still evaluating?

13 MR. BLANCKO: That's correct.

14 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Councilmember Avilés?

16 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you. Thank you,  
17 chairs. Thank you all for your work and testimony.

18 I'd like to-- I'd like to know, Commissioner, you  
19 mentioned-- Commissioner, for our DSS Commissioner--  
20 You mentioned standard policy of notifying  
21 councilmembers. Can-- can you articulate what that  
22 policy actually is?

23 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yeah, absolutely. So for a  
24 typical DHS site, we are looking-- we notify at least  
25 30 days, but I think the average is actually more

1  
2 like 200 days. That is for a standard, you know,  
3 nine-year-or-longer contracted site. For these  
4 emergency sites, we're notifying as quickly as we  
5 possibly can. There have absolutely been some  
6 instances where it is the day of, and I know there  
7 was at least one phone call I made to a councilmember  
8 who's not here, but where I called him personally to  
9 say the bus is on its way. And I hate doing that.  
10 But, you know, we have been in really, um, urgent and  
11 emergency situations.

12       You know, I will-- It is-- It's a process in  
13 this recent-- in the-- over the last year that we  
14 have-- have really struggled to keep up with given  
15 the pace of the openings. There were-- it is-- it's  
16 now that it is a whole of government effort. It is--  
17 it is more predictable, but early on, when DHS was  
18 the lead, there were days or weeks where we were  
19 opening four, five, six sites. And I will-- You  
20 know, to the extent that we dropped the ball, I will  
21 own that and-- and certainly happy to follow up on  
22 any particulars.

23       COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Sure. So just for  
24 clarification, for a typical site, at least 30 days  
25 prior to its opening?

2 COMMISSIONER PARK: Correct, and it is--

3 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: And 200 days--

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Is more like average. Like  
5 yeah, we will notify-- we don't generally notify on a  
6 site, you know, as soon as we are through the  
7 procurement process, and given the fact that we have--  
8 - that most of our typical sites involve  
9 construction, we will notify as soon as we possibly  
10 can.

11 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Got it. And so-- so in my  
12 short tenure, I've never experienced any of these.  
13 Certainly I've experienced-- I just discovered a new  
14 facility in our district that I had no idea about.  
15 In fact, my most reliable information source are the  
16 residents on the block who see the activity of moving  
17 in supplies into a building, of when shelters are  
18 being opened. And I understand this has been an  
19 emergency, and we're working better at it, but even  
20 most recently, we discovered a new facility in the  
21 district that your staff didn't even have information  
22 about. So, I'm going to-- I'm going to get there.

23 Again, there is certainly Grace here, because we  
24 are operating under constraints. But this has been  
25 an ongoing issue, that-- of opening up a facility

3 doesn't happen within 24 hours, right? For all  
4 intents and purposes, the agencies are-- are  
5 inspecting these facilities to make sure they meet  
6 certain standards, they're moving things in, they're  
7 gathering supplies. It doesn't happen in 15-- you  
8 know, a day. And so I just have to appeal for  
9 increased courtesy, to-- to collaborate with us so  
10 that we can support, because our community has  
11 received all manner, and has many facilities in it.  
12 And we have wanted to support, but we're constantly  
13 at the back end playing defense and trying to make  
14 something out of nothing.

15 COMMISSIONER PARK: First, let me just start by  
16 really thanking you for your understanding that the  
17 unusual set of circumstances. I think we should  
18 touch base offline and make sure that we-- that the  
19 DSS has all of the most appropriate communication.  
20 You know, maybe it is something as simple as not  
21 having the right phone number, right email address.  
22 I would also say, you know, there are multiple  
23 agencies here, obviously, opening sites. So we  
24 should also just make sure that that we as a-- as a  
25 team are consistently notifying, you know, because--  
because DHS does have a large shelter footprint, we

1 do have protocols that are maybe a little bit newer  
2 to some of our sister agencies.

3  
4 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah. No. There's  
5 definitely some sharing, some sharing of challenges.  
6 But in terms of the food you mentioned, and the  
7 reason why I'm directing it to you, Commissioner, is  
8 because most of the facilities in my district are run  
9 under your agency purview.

10 In terms of the food, most recently, we've  
11 received pictures of boxes of Cheez-Its and the  
12 peaches in the syrup, and people saying that they  
13 have received a care-- care package of tuna fish and  
14 crackers, which is supposed to be their meals for the  
15 day. This is-- Yeah, I'd like to-- I'd like to know  
16 how does-- how do we confuse that with three meals a  
17 day?

18 Sure. So there-- I think this is a reflection of  
19 the various models of sheltering that we have going  
20 on in the face of this emergency. And I'll start,  
21 and-- and George can chime in.

22 So in some of the points of time where we have--  
23 have really been at peak capacity, we have placed--  
24 we as a city have placed some families in scatter-  
25 site hotel rooms. So rather than in, sort of, the

2 typical model that we've been talking about the City,  
3 whichever agency is lead, has bought out the entire  
4 hotel. There is no security at the front door.  
5 There is-- is organized structure. There have been  
6 instances where because we don't have-- we have  
7 simply hit a wall, and we have actually just placed a  
8 family in a hotel room. So there's maybe, you know,  
9 in a 100-unit hotel, there's-- there's four rooms  
10 that are being used. And this is a hypothetical  
11 example, right, but for rooms being used for-- for a  
12 client. In that case they are getting, we want to  
13 make sure-- We understand people have very limited  
14 resources, they're getting shelf-stable food, so that  
15 they are able. Those are short term placements. And  
16 if somebody, you know, if they reach the end of that  
17 and still have an ongoing need, they'll be moved to  
18 something that is more stable.

19 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER PARK: In the DHS facilities where  
21 we have where-- we have bought out the entire hotel,  
22 we are providing three meals a day.

23 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: I'm not sure that's the  
24 case. In some-- In a facility in my district where  
25 the Cheez-Its were good the first two days, and then

2 the families were like, "Okay. Enough with the  
3 Cheez-Its."

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Let's compare addresses  
5 because--

6 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah--

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: Because there is this model  
8 with the box of shelf-stable food.

9 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, yeah. Let's look  
10 into it.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Councilmember, do you have a  
12 question?

13 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah. Last-- Last  
14 question. Thank you. We'll-- We'll look into it.  
15 This morning, we had another facility in my district  
16 who-- a family member stumbled upon a local service  
17 provider. They didn't know where they really were.  
18 And there are no services at the facility. No  
19 telling them where they are, what-- where they can  
20 get access to anything.

21 And so, I'd love to follow up with you on the  
22 facility in Red Hook, and this facility Phoenix, on  
23 39th Street in Sunset Park, among others. Thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: Absolutely. Let's follow up  
25 offline.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. Um,  
3 some larger question: Can you explain what checks  
4 and balances are absent from the emergency  
5 procurement process, versus the traditional  
6 procurement that makes it so much faster to do the  
7 emergency?

8 I think that's kind of the overall policy  
9 question that maybe you're trying to answer, we're  
10 trying to answer. We want nonprofit. We want less  
11 expensive. We want high quality. I think we all  
12 want that, but maybe we get it in different ways. Go  
13 ahead.

14 MR. DIAMOND: Absolutely. So thank you, Chair  
15 Brewer. In terms of the overall structure of  
16 comparing an emergency procurement to a standard  
17 procurement (I know as Director Florez had testified  
18 previously on separate counsel hearings about the  
19 differences between the two), it essentially comes  
20 down to timing. The standards are-- are going to  
21 remain the same in terms of vendor integrity, in  
22 terms of vendor responsibility.

23 In terms of competition and evaluation, I think  
24 the biggest difference we can say is if you use a  
25 CSB, a bid, an RFP, if you use any of these other



1 methods, it's going to tell you exactly how you have  
2 to select and evaluate, whereas an emergency  
3 procurement is much more contextual. It's about the  
4 idea of using as much as--as much competition as is  
5 possible and practicable.  
6

7       So I think the major difference is in it gives an  
8 agency the flexibility to meet the emergency in that  
9 different ways. We've shown-- So DSS has a very  
10 specific way, which is very similar to its normal  
11 way, and it's kind of using it and just saying,  
12 "Okay, great, I can use that," and go ahead, that's  
13 not going to be the case for others.

14       So I'd say systemically where you're going to  
15 gain time in particular is the fact that a contract  
16 is considered effective, long, long, long before the  
17 period that we would say filing or registration in a  
18 normal contract. So that's-- It's a combination of  
19 timing, and-- and kind of a much more contextual  
20 analysis.

21       CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I guess that's why DocGo got  
22 selected. But I have to say, if that's the answer,  
23 then we should be working with our nonprofits in the  
24 city of New York to get them. United Neighborhood  
25 Houses is huge. They can handle this. I'm just

1 saying, I know they can. They are multimillion  
2 dollars. So as time goes on, thinking proactively,  
3 God forbid, there's another some kind of crisis,  
4 stick to our own, and to the nonprofit community, and  
5 have them prepared for whatever you think is the  
6 faster way.  
7

8 MR. DIAMOND: Absolutely. And Chair I would add  
9 to kind of picking up on an earlier-- an earlier  
10 moment about moving away from emergency contracts, I  
11 would like to make it clear, it is absolutely the  
12 City's policy to move away.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But it hasn't happened yet.  
14 I see some two sixes out there like two-oh, two-six?

15 MR. DIAMOND: Completely, but we're constantly  
16 looking. Every contracting situation is saying where  
17 can we make this the most competitive possible?

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Question for Dr.  
19 Long: So I like that Checkbook thing that the  
20 Comptroller has. I remember when it started. But  
21 you don't use it. So-- Because you are not a city  
22 agency. So how do we keep track of you, as your  
23 contracts, without the Checkbook? What is our method  
24 for being as transparent as Checkbook.

25 DR. LONG: Well, I'm not familiar--

2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We can't just call you.  
3 You're not-- You don't know Checkbook?

4 DR. LONG: I'm not familiar with Checkbook, but--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Everybody else is familiar  
6 with Checkbook except for you.

7 DR. LONG: I'm just a primary care doctor.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Please.  
9 Give me a break. [LAUGHTER]

10 DR. LONG: But, I will say-- and I know the  
11 Comptroller can correct me when he testifies, but I  
12 believe all of our contracts--

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [TO COMPTROLLER LANDER:] Can  
14 you explain to him at some point what Checkbook is?  
15 Thank you.

16 DR. LONG: Maybe afterwards, Brad.

17 COMPTROLLER LANDERS: He's giving me a lot of  
18 tours. I'll be glad to give him one.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I was there when it started,  
20 of course. Go ahead.

21 DR. LONG: You were.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I was there when everything  
23 started.

24 DR. LONG: I believe at this point that all of  
25 our contracts have been through City Hall, shared now

2 with the Comptroller's office. So going forward, we  
3 look forward to following up more about that.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, because it's not  
5 transparent, just FYI.

6 Um, the other question I have for-- Just going  
7 back to HPD, and the worship, faith-based. How many  
8 are actually up and running? Maybe you told us this,  
9 but I don't remember.

10 MR. BLANCO: Two.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Just two.

12 MR. BLANCO: Two in the Bronx.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Out of 50.

14 MR. BLANCO: 50 is the goal.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So what's the timing? How's  
16 that going to work?

17 MR. BLANCO: It's slower than you'd like.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, I know it's slow.

19 MR. BLANCO: So we have a couple more that are in  
20 the queue for the next couple of weeks. You know,  
21 they'll-- the-- they will be ready when we feel like  
22 they're safe.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: All right. I-- we will talk  
24 about that later.

2 Um, the other thing is the unions are not  
3 participating in building these big tents. What's  
4 going on with the unions and the tents?

5 I think that's for you.

6 Unions, and tents, and construction. Are you  
7 using union labor?

8 MR. BLANCO: So NYCEM is not holding the contract  
9 for the tents as of now. Like, as we mentioned, it's  
10 still very much under discussion. But we'd be happy  
11 to follow up with--

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: What's the thing on Randalls  
13 Island, if it's not a tent?

14 MR. BLANCO: That's not a NYCEM contract.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

16 MR. BLANCO: We're happy to follow up with DCAS,  
17 who holds the Garner contract, and follow up with  
18 you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Does anybody know about this  
20 contract? No? There's little problem with silos.  
21 You know? You've heard the silos? Okay. I'm just  
22 saying-- All right. So you don't know anything  
23 about it? All right, go ahead.

24 CHAIRPERSON WON: For the places of faith, we've,  
25 we're seeing reports all throughout the city of

1 places of faith that are housing migrants. And  
2 you're stating that there's only two contracts out  
3 there. Can you explain what's going on?  
4

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, we're--

6 CHAIRPERSON WON: Because they're clearly being  
7 bussed by MOIA and other city agencies to these  
8 places of faith.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah, so the two  
10 that I'm talking about are the two that we've  
11 contracted with, you know? Sometimes houses of  
12 worship, you know, do their own independent thing  
13 where they reach out and, you know, help asylum  
14 seekers. This is like a city contract. And that's  
15 why we're trying to make it safe and work out well,  
16 you know? And give the houses of worship the support  
17 they need, quite frankly, to do this.

18 CHAIRPERSON WON: So are the places of worship  
19 that are currently housing migrants going to get a  
20 contract?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: So if there are  
22 other houses of worship, other than the two I  
23 mentioned that you know about, just let me know, and  
24 we'll reach out to them and get a sense of what's  
25 happening there.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. My next question. Oh,  
3 before I go to my next question, this is for MOCS,  
4 for-- We received some of the agency some emergency  
5 contract notifications, but they often go to a  
6 variety of different people in the council, can you  
7 direct ACCO's at your agencies to send contract  
8 notification to council finance on the speaker's  
9 leadership team? So, we are unable to track all of  
10 them because it's being sent to different people.  
11 The people that the speaker's team would like it to  
12 be sent to are Richard Lee, which is the Finance  
13 Director for the Council, Jonathan Rosenberg, and  
14 Florentine Kapoor. And we can get you those emails  
15 as well through Alex.

16 And going back to MWBEs: What guidance has  
17 administration issued to agencies and contractors  
18 regarding standards and best practices for  
19 contracting with MWBEs during emergency situations?

20 MR. DIAMOND: Absolutely. Thank you for that  
21 question, Chair Won. So, as it comes to the city's  
22 policy regarding emergency procurements and MWBEs, I  
23 would note, the recent-- relatively recent now,  
24 Executive Order 36, regarding one of the aspects of  
25 it was directing city agencies to ensure that when

1 possible that they are getting at least one bid  
2 proposal or quote from MWBEs. It's something that  
3 this administration takes very seriously.  
4

5 In this building, every Monday, we have a very  
6 specific meeting with our procuring agencies about  
7 MWBE procurement, and how we maximize the equity of  
8 our response. I think we saw in many emergency  
9 scenarios that that can fall by the wayside, and  
10 that's something that we take very, very seriously.

11 I would note, again, as we talk about the  
12 proportions of types of organizations we are  
13 contracting with, nonprofits are not MWBEs by the  
14 definitions. So of course, there's-- you know, it's  
15 a balancing the desire to work with CBOs, and the  
16 desire to work with city-certified MWBEs. It's  
17 something that we take very seriously.

18 CHAIRPERSON WON: Do you know, what percentage  
19 are MWBE's currently?

20 MR. DIAMOND: Specifically, I'd be happy to get  
21 back to you. I don't have the data in front of me as  
22 to how many are-- the percentage of our contractors  
23 would be, or a percentage of that contract value, but  
24 I'd be happy to follow up with your office.  
25



2 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. We'll follow up on that,  
3 Alex? And then Molly, could you repeat for us one  
4 more time the number of nonprofit contracts, so that  
5 we could calculate that as something that can't be  
6 certified as MWBEs in our calculations?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. So just to clarify, I  
8 think we-- we need to get back to you on the exact  
9 number of not-for-profit contracts. Of the 205 that  
10 Charles mentioned, 127 are DHS contracts. And so we  
11 are-- virtually all of those are with not-for-profit  
12 organizations. But that is that is indicative. It's  
13 not the final answer, and we'll circle back.

14 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay, thank you. And for DHS  
15 per Passport, there is a pending amendment to HANYC,  
16 the Hotel Association Foundation's contract with DHS  
17 to amend the contract from \$237 million to \$1.365  
18 billion through August 2026. Can you help us  
19 understand: Why did DHS deem it necessary to hire an  
20 intermediary to source space for asylum seekers,  
21 especially to renew it now, or to extend the contract  
22 when you know that you've been at full capacity and  
23 you have sourced every single hotel possible?

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. So we-- HANYC is-- the  
25 primary role that they are playing is as a fiscal

2 agent and not as a source, they-- sourcing agent.  
3 They do help with the sourcing, but the primary role  
4 is that the payments to the hotels themselves are  
5 passing through HANYC, and we do that so that it  
6 takes it off of the not-for-profit contract, right?,  
7 so that the not-for-profit doesn't have the  
8 responsibility and the financial liability of-- of  
9 dealing with the hotel. It smooths the process for  
10 us as an administration. We are working really hard  
11 to make sure that we are providing quality services  
12 with more or less-- to, you know, a population that  
13 is 70% or 80% larger than it was 18 months ago, and  
14 our staff is certainly not 80% larger.

15 So, by working with a fiscal agent, where we are  
16 managing the HANYC contract, and they are managing  
17 the individual payments to the hotels, it's a really  
18 efficient way for us to do business and make sure  
19 that we aren't putting too much obligation on our  
20 not-for-profit partners.

21 So we are extending-- The bulk of-- The vast  
22 majority of the dollars in that contract are passed  
23 through rent payments to the hotels. Although we  
24 hope not to grow our hotel footprint anymore, I'm not  
25 going to-- I'm never say never, because this has been

2 such a challenging window. But you know, certainly  
3 we have dramatically slowed the pace of our growth of  
4 our hotel footprint. But we also know it will take  
5 some time to transition to other kinds of shelters.  
6 So, we are extending those hotel contracts. We want  
7 to do it one time rather than doing it year-by-year,  
8 so that we have some predictability. It helps us  
9 manage our contracting workload. And there are  
10 cancellation clauses in-- in every contract, both  
11 with the individual hotels and with-- with HANYC. So  
12 that if we-- if it turns out we don't need the  
13 capacity, we can stop.

14 CHAIRPERSON WON: Why was this contract not  
15 publicly bid?

16 COMMISSIONER PARK: HANYC also responded to our  
17 RFP.

18 CHAIRPERSON WON: So, you're saying that it was  
19 publicly bid?

20 COMMISSIONER PARK: Correct.

21 CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Just about Arrow. Back to  
23 Arrow. Sometimes it's Mulligan Security and Arrow.  
24 Why are they at the same facility? And then second,  
25 who determines how many people in terms of security

1 are necessary at a particular facility? And also,  
2 finally, they are making at least from my  
3 calculation, sometimes \$72,000 a year, is that normal  
4 for a security officer at this level?  
5

6 DR. LONG: So great questions. In terms of the,  
7 I'll talk about (I'll just a couple of notes here)  
8 the cost, and then the-- how we determine the number  
9 needed, and then about--

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Mulligan

11 DR. LONG: Arrow versus Mulligan.

12 So in terms of the costs, we can get back to you  
13 with more precise numbers about the cost that we're  
14 paying the security vendors for the guards they're  
15 providing. I will note the numbers you're using  
16 might be from when Garner was subcontracted with  
17 Mulligan earlier on in the crisis. Since then, we've  
18 sought to reduce costs. So the number may be  
19 different than-- I think, is different today. So  
20 that's what I can circle back with you about.

21 In terms of the number needed, we do walk-  
22 throughs with the NYPD. We look at, depending on the  
23 number of entrances and exits, and depending on the  
24 number of floors and the unique layout of each site,  
25 we determine together what the need in terms of the

1 number of guards would be, and that's how many guards  
2 we have at each site.  
3

4 In terms of Arrow versus Mulligan, our intention  
5 is to have one vendor per site. I would love the  
6 example, which we can look into afterwards, about if  
7 there maybe-- it could have been a special  
8 circumstance or something like that. But then of  
9 course, going forward, our ability to reduce costs is  
10 going-- the most important thing we're doing is  
11 again, the competitive RFP to introduce competition  
12 for cost effectiveness and quality into the process.  
13 That RFP is closed, and we look forward to evaluating  
14 the results of that as soon as we can.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I don't think you need as  
16 many people. I would like to see-- I saw at the  
17 bottom if I remember correctly, like the ESL  
18 contract, the OSHA contract, services to get you back  
19 at work kind of contracts? \$25,000 each compared to  
20 the monumental millions. So that's wrong. In other  
21 words, why are we not using our opportunities to  
22 spend money to get people to work? Now, of course,  
23 thank goodness for Tom Perez and everybody else in  
24 the White House for thinking that they can pull off  
25 hopefully, some TPS. But it's just crazy for me to

1  
2 be spending money on Arrow, DocGo, et cetera, and not  
3 for the nonprofits that get people back to work. Can  
4 somebody comment on that? That's what we need. What  
5 do they want? They want jobs. They want to learn  
6 English. They want training, et cetera. But we're  
7 spending money on guards, and I don't know about  
8 these caseworkers at DocGo. Can somebody answer  
9 this? Why we're not spending more money on these  
10 other kinds of services? It said \$25,000 on my list.

11 DR. LONG: I can start with just a couple of  
12 thoughts. And actually this goes back to  
13 Councilmember Ariola's question in terms of, "What is  
14 success?" "What does success look like so far?" And  
15 I'll give a concrete example. One aspect of success  
16 to me is that we've had 24,000 casework encounters  
17 with our asylum seekers. I am a true believer in  
18 case management. I view within primary care  
19 medicine, my medical role is that of a medical case  
20 manager. I think that needs to be the backbone of  
21 our response going forward. And we do use our  
22 vendors to provide for us people that provide that  
23 service. The reason case management is so important  
24 is people are at different stages of the process of  
25 seeking asylum, of work authorization. We're

1  
2 assuming to know exactly how many people fall into  
3 each bucket and have targeted legal outreach,  
4 targeted outreach for those who would qualify for  
5 resettlement programs. That's-- that's going to be a  
6 game changer in my mind.

7       So, I just want to defend the casework and case  
8 management. I do think is a really important part of  
9 the process. That is not in any way intended to say  
10 that I don't agree with you about the importance of  
11 nonprofits, which I'll see if anybody else wants to  
12 weigh in on.

13       DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Sure. Like the--  
14 - Particularly for some of our Upstate locations, you  
15 know, we partner with nonprofits that have actually  
16 (particularly in the Erie County case) that have  
17 actually been serving refugees and asylum seekers for  
18 years, you know? Those are the--

19       CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah. I know them. I know  
20 the--

21       DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. And  
22 they're-- and they do great work, and they care  
23 deeply, and they're engaging our folks, trying to  
24 help them down the road, connecting them to legal  
25 service providers, connecting them to, you know,

1 potentially the-- the next need their child might  
2 have, an ESL program, I mean, you know the--

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It's just not happening  
4 here. In the hotels that I'm in and out of, there's  
5 no ESL. A little bit, but not enough, five. And  
6 there isn't enough OSHA, et cetera, et cetera.

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: I think, Councilmember that  
8 we absolutely are addressing a hierarchy of needs,  
9 right? Getting people sheltered fed and safe,  
10 accessing-- connecting to the very basic health care,  
11 initial key health care that Dr. Long mentioned.  
12 Those have been the focus. Which is not to say that  
13 the other pieces are not important, and we're  
14 working. There are a lot of agencies that aren't at  
15 the table here because they aren't-- they aren't  
16 necessarily the leads, but had been providing really  
17 amazing work. We're partnering with the DYCD. We're  
18 partnering with-- with ACS who has been able to  
19 connect families to services as well. We continue to  
20 look for ways that we can expand what we're doing.  
21 But at the end of the day, we keep coming back to our  
22 touch points: Are people sheltered? Fed? Safe?  
23 With access to medical care?  
24  
25



2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I mean, there may be  
3 a disagreement with that, but I appreciate what  
4 you're saying.

5 CHAIRPERSON WON: I just want to put on the  
6 record to return to what we were talking about for  
7 HANYC, per Passport and Checkbook, HANYC was an  
8 emergency contract. It was not traditional sealed  
9 competitive bidding through normal procurement  
10 process. We saw a letter in Oasis for the bid, which  
11 seemed to be written with HANYC in mind. We are  
12 curious about how many other entities bid for that  
13 contract. Could you share that?

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: So I will certainly follow up  
15 after the fact. My understanding is that they did  
16 bid through the-- the Sanctuary RFP that we put out,  
17 right? So it was an emergency RFP, but it was a  
18 competitive process.

19 I don't know that anybody bid for exactly the  
20 same suite of services. It is a somewhat unusual  
21 function. But again, I can certainly follow up with  
22 more specific details after that.

23 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. Thank you. And I-- And  
24 to follow up to what Councilmember Brewer was sharing  
25 for the caseworkers. I agree with Dr. Long, they're

2 incredibly important, but I want to make sure that  
3 it's on public record that according to the DocGo  
4 contract, they're supposed to be 24 hours a day, \$75  
5 per hour, which means that if you are working seven  
6 hour days per week for five days that the caseworker  
7 for DocGo gets \$126,000, whereas the average pay for  
8 a caseworker in New York City is \$55,289. I don't  
9 know for the H+H contract, the caseworkers have a  
10 different pay scale. Do you know off the top of your  
11 head?

12 DR. LONG: Um, I'm not sure off top my head.

13 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay, we'll follow up on that.

14 Um, my last few questions is about the unions for  
15 MOCS. Has the agency been ensuring that emergency  
16 contractors are complying with labor standards and  
17 applicable labor law?

18 MR. DIAMOND: So Council-member-- Chair Won,  
19 agencies are required to comply with that labor law,  
20 regardless of the use of an emergency procurement or  
21 not per se, right? It's going to depend on the  
22 characteristics of that-- of that work related law.

23 So we have done so, I would say. I know that  
24 unions have come to us before and said, "Hey, we're  
25 concerned about some program decision." As you know,

2 that's not MOCS's traditional role. However, we do  
3 hear that we are constantly in communication with  
4 agencies, with City Hall about instances where that's  
5 happened. And if unions have those concerns, we've--  
6 we've communicated them. Although as you know, we  
7 don't approve emergency procurements in the same way  
8 that we normally would.

9 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. And then for the other  
10 agencies, I know that for HPD, we have contracts,  
11 contractors rebuilding Austell Place, for example, in  
12 my district. Are there-- Are we aware of any vendors  
13 selected from unionized companies? Are these  
14 contracts subject to prevailing wage requirements?  
15 And are agencies auditing to ensure that prevailing  
16 wage is enforced where applicable, and have any  
17 violations been identified?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yeah. Let me--  
19 Let me get back to you, Councilmember. We'll figure  
20 out who the folks were, what they were doing, how  
21 much they were getting paid, and if there were any  
22 violations for Austell.

23 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay, we'll follow up for, um,  
24 HPD and NYCEM, and DCAS, it sounds like.

1  
2           Okay, we're going to go through one minute of  
3 lightning-round questions, because we do have to go  
4 to the Comptroller. We have a hard stop at four.  
5 We're going to do one minute for Councilmember  
6 Ariola.

7           COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you. Dr. Long, this  
8 is for you. I know we put a lot of emphasis on  
9 children and vaccinations and such, but what are the  
10 protocols for adults coming in to get vaccinations,  
11 and also if they-- how many who have been at the-- at  
12 the Intake Center or at any of our respite sites have  
13 had any type of communicable diseases and when they  
14 are diagnosed with such, what protocol is in place  
15 for-- for treating and quarantine?

16           DR. LONG: Great questions. So in terms of--  
17 I'll start with the isolation protocols and talk  
18 about vaccines among adults and children.

19           So the isolation protocols are-- When we screen  
20 for communicable diseases upfront at the arrival  
21 centers, the first thing we do, we immediately  
22 isolate you in a private room that is safe, and we  
23 have a medical team on there that will attend to any  
24 needs you have. And then you'll spend the duration  
25 of your isolation time, which is the time you're

1 contagious, depending on what communicable disease  
2 you might have, in one of our isolation rooms in a  
3 hotel. When you no longer need that room, you then  
4 leave the hotel. So you're kept safe the whole time  
5 and we attend to your medical care as well.  
6

7 With respect to vaccinations for adults and  
8 children, we-- Just to be totally honest, we are  
9 providing a tremendous number of vaccinations for  
10 both. The way it should be done is, in my mind,  
11 people should be getting vaccinated in Texas before  
12 they come to New York City. They're unvaccinated,  
13 potentially at risk of contracting or transmitting  
14 communicable diseases their whole journey up here.  
15 Sometimes this is not the first place that they go,  
16 in which case they haven't been vaccinated there for  
17 a longer amount of time before coming to New York  
18 City.

19 Here we do the best we can, which is immediately  
20 when you're doing intake, we offer you all of the  
21 vaccines to bring you up to speed that we that we  
22 can. We've done so many vaccines. We've been  
23 working with the Department of Health, and we nearly  
24 exhausted their supply. They had to order more.  
25 Again, 37,000 total so far. It just speaks to the

3 tremendous need. And again, if more was done in  
4 Texas, we wouldn't have to do as much here. We ended  
5 up catching up and doing the work that people need to  
6 have done, because vaccines in my mind are a human  
7 right. But they haven't had the opportunity,  
8 including in Texas, until they get here.

9 CHAIRPERSON WON: I just also want to put on the  
10 record that Floating Hospital, a clinic in my  
11 district, has let us know that to enter DOE schools  
12 (as you just testified) children require multiple  
13 visits to catch them up on vaccinations or do  
14 bloodwork to screen for immunity and preventable  
15 diseases. And the Floating Hospital has received  
16 referrals and requests from DOHMH, DOE, individual  
17 shelters, Queen CBOs for asylum seekers to provide  
18 these vaccinations. So, we're going to continue to  
19 follow up, to track exactly which shelters in my  
20 district are continuing to shuffle them to this small  
21 clinic.

22 We're going to go to our last two questions.  
23 Holden, and then Councilmember Williams.

24 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you. Lightning  
25 round. So DocGo contract: How many subcontractors?  
Because you mentioned before when I was questioning

2 you that most-- most of the problems that were  
3 published were subcontractor problems. How many did  
4 DocGo use?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: So DocGo is  
6 using 15 subcontractors, and two of them were the--

7 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Two-- two were the  
8 problem.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Two were the  
10 problem.

11 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Who's responsible when  
12 that happens? By the way, do we get a list of  
13 subcontractors--

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yes, we do.

15 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: --before you sign the  
16 contract?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yes, we do.

18 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. And you vet the  
19 subcontractors?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: They do the  
21 vetting of the subcontractors.

22 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: They did it?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Yes, they are  
24 their subcontractors.

2 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, so who's-- In the  
3 end, who's responsible for that?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: Well, we're  
5 responsible for the work, right? And that's why we  
6 talk to them every day and make sure that if there's  
7 a problem with the subcontractor, we're directing  
8 them on how to make the changes--

9 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: But so-- So when that--  
10 When you find the subcontractor did that, do you not  
11 use the subcontractor anymore? Do you say they're  
12 barred?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: I mean, like,  
14 you know, were talking about--

15 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: They were-- they were the  
16 problem.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: --the  
18 subcontractor in Albany, you know? Like, we're not  
19 used another security company in Albany.

20 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. Let's say the  
21 transportation subcontractor--

22 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay, we're-- we're--

23 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: --just dropped somebody  
24 off, migrants off somewhere in no man's land, right?  
25 Do you-- And you found out they did that?



2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: No. That's  
3 wrong. They dropped off where they were supposed to  
4 go. It just took them another two and a half hours  
5 to come back to pick them up, and they were waiting  
6 for about an hour and a half.

7 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. The Comptroller has to  
8 leave, so we have to move on. But then we'll come  
9 back.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: I'm sorry.

11 CHAIRPERSON WON: Councilmember Williams?

12 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. Just a few  
13 questions. So will H+H-- I know because of your  
14 structure, you have a more corporate structure, which  
15 doesn't allow for as much transparency, just-- so  
16 just wondering if you plan to give greater  
17 transparency around some of the lump-sum payments,  
18 and what subcontractors are making.

19 The next question is about MWBEs and de-bundling  
20 contracts. I don't-- I know the whole idea is to  
21 make it expedient, and when you start de-bundling, it  
22 causes confusion. But I'm just wondering if there  
23 have been any thoughts about how to break out some of  
24 these contracts for MWBEs to be awarded?

1  
2           And I was just wondering if the folks who have  
3 been contracted have been subjected to the state  
4 mandate to contract out 30% MWBEs. And if, when you  
5 write the RFPs, if you're creating any criteria,  
6 incentives within the RFP for these larger companies  
7 to subcontract with MWBEs.

8           And then, last but not least, just listening to  
9 the conversation about the security [bell rings]--  
10 I'm almost done-- the conversation about the security  
11 hourly wages, I'm pretty sure they're not making \$75  
12 an hour, because I know companies typically do  
13 indirect cost rates. And so I'm wondering what  
14 percentage you all have allowed them to bill for the  
15 indirect cost rate? Because a person could  
16 technically be making \$13 an hour and the rest of  
17 that \$75 an hour actually benefits and goes to the  
18 company. So thank you.

19           DR. LONG: Yeah, great questions. I-- I'll get  
20 started, and I'll try to be fast.

21           So in terms of our contracts, first, I believe,  
22 and our Comptroller can confirm this in a bit, that  
23 we've now shared all of our contracts through City  
24 Hall with the Comptroller's office.

1  
2 In terms of pay, just to give the statistics:  
3 So we said that we've spent as a city \$2.08 billion.  
4 That's to date in the crisis. H+H's share of that is  
5 \$743 million. And that's the amount expended with  
6 the denominator of 2.08 billion.

7 In terms of MWBE criteria, we set the 30% goal  
8 for all of our contractors as appropriate, and it's  
9 part of the criteria through the RFP process that we  
10 use as well. So-- And we-- As I mentioned earlier,  
11 we've just gone through the-- or we're going through  
12 the RFP process for three different aspects or  
13 service lines of work right now. So that will be--  
14 that'll be coming up shortly.

15 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: And you are, like,  
16 making sure they are complying with a 30% MWBE?

17 DR. LONG: We do closely monitor that. Yes.

18 And then on the indirect, I'll have to follow up  
19 with you about that. I'm not sure off the top my  
20 head.

21 COMMISSIONER PARK: On the DSS side, because the  
22 majority of our contracts are with human service  
23 providers, that we-- you know, they aren't MWBEs, but  
24 we are actively pushing them to use MWBE subs. As--  
25 As Charles said, this is something that-- where

2 there's a weekly meeting on it to make sure that we  
3 are moving that. But it does mean that it is bundled  
4 the way that you initially pointed out.

5 I would also note that anything that is federally  
6 funded, the sort of speedy MWBE procurement  
7 methodology were capped at \$250,000, unlike the city  
8 where we can go up to, I think, a million, a million  
9 and a half.

10 So that's something that I think we-- many of us  
11 have on our federal legislative agenda. We'd like to  
12 see that higher so that we can do more MWBE  
13 procurement.

14 MR. DIAMOND: And briefly, Councilmember, I would  
15 note for the de-bundling question and the  
16 subcontracting question, as the Commissioner said,  
17 under the leadership of Chief Business Diversity  
18 Officer Michael Garner, there are there are meetings  
19 at a minimum weekly, but many times a week regarding  
20 how can we strategically look at this portfolio and  
21 maximize equity. It is of crucial, crucial  
22 importance. And again, those subcontracting amounts:  
23 I believe HHS's food RFP was actually 35%, and  
24 constantly pushing the envelope whenever we can.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SARKISSIAN: And, you know,  
3 for HPD, we have four different prime contracts. So  
4 it is a subcontracting question that we're trying to  
5 solve for too. We're talking to our folks regularly  
6 in the Upstate communities. They're actually trying  
7 to get to know folks, you know? It's a little  
8 different, because you're going to Schenectady and  
9 don't really know who the folks are in Schenectady.  
10 So, at first you're trying to, like, stand up an  
11 operation and do it quickly. And then after that,  
12 you're trying to understand, "Who are the food folks  
13 that we can contract with," right? And are they able  
14 to essentially provide 600 meals a day for these 200  
15 people that are in a hotel. And it's not a large  
16 universe of vendors that can actually do that. And  
17 so that-- what you're also trying to do is find out  
18 like, do they provide culturally appropriate food?  
19 And are they MWBE, right? So you're trying to find  
20 that sweet spot, but it's stuff we talk about every  
21 day when we're trying to like nail down who our  
22 vendors actually are.

23 MR. BLANCO: And finally, for NYSEM, for our  
24 Respite Centers, all of-- our all the contracts that  
25 we have that we've done for Emergency procurements,

1 COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS jointly with the  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS 182

2 except for the laundry vendor has been an MWBE. The  
3 laundry vendor has subcontracted a number of MWBEs.  
4 And again, these are for the emergency contracts. We  
5 also are obviously utilizing our requirements  
6 contracts for DCAS and other agencies that were  
7 required to do so.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Everybody's okay? Thank you  
9 very much, panel. We look forward to nonprofits. We  
10 look forward to New York City vendors. And we look  
11 forward to no emergency contracts and regular  
12 vending. And if you want help doing that, we're  
13 available. Thank you very much.

14 PANEL MEMBERS: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And now we'll hear from our  
16 Comptroller, Brad Lander.

17 Mr. Comptroller, the floor is yours. Thank you.

18 COUNSEL: Actually, I'm going to swear in the  
19 Comptroller, Councilmember, if that's all right?

20 Comptroller Lander, would you please raise your  
21 right hand?

22 Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the  
23 whole truth and nothing but the truth in your  
24 testimony today? And to respond honestly to  
25 Councilmember questions?

2 COMPROLLER LANDER: I do.

3 COUNSEL: Thank you. Go ahead.

4 COMPROLLER LANDER: Thank you. Thank you, Chair  
5 Brewer, and Chair Won other members of the Council  
6 for this important hearing on the scores of  
7 contracts, now the hundreds of contracts the city  
8 agencies have entered into to provide shelter and  
9 services for more than 100,000 people seeking asylum,  
10 who've arrived in New York City over the past 14  
11 months.

12 And I want to emphasize the importance and the  
13 value of this hearing. Dr. Long is correct for  
14 example, that H+H has now given us their contracts.  
15 We started asking for them last winter, I think it  
16 was December, it might have been January, they  
17 arrived this week. So the hearing, I think, in  
18 addition to continued asking, has helped prompt good  
19 progress. And in many ways, that's what we want to  
20 do here in one year on, and a bit more from the start  
21 of this, is to really interrogate where are we and  
22 what can we be doing to make sure we're getting the  
23 best value for the resources we're spending.

24 The Comptroller's office monitors emergency  
25 contracting and spending as carefully as we possibly

3 can. And I'm not going to read everything in here,  
4 you can go through it as well. But I think it's  
5 important to just underline a couple of things.

6 The primary thing that emergency contracting  
7 exempts agencies from is to do a competitive sealed  
8 bid, or an RFP, or a cost competitive proposal. They  
9 can, as you've heard, but they're not required to.  
10 And of course, in some cases, doing a bid, doing an  
11 RFP can take a long time and would prevent you from  
12 moving as quickly as you need to. But you don't get  
13 as good a cost when you don't bid a contract. And  
14 that is what we're really trying to balance here.

15 It's also worth noting that both the charter and  
16 the PPB rules refer to unforeseen situations. And so  
17 a value-- You know, this remains a situation for  
18 which flexibility and urgency are needed. But the  
19 situation is no longer unforeseen. And so how do we  
20 use what we know a year in to make sure we're  
21 providing the best possible services at the best  
22 possible price with effective contractors.

23 And of course, things keep changing. TPS changed  
24 last night. So that'll shift how the asylum seeker  
25 Application Center is providing legal services. And  
of course, flexibility is needed. But there are more



1  
2 ways to make sure we move to more cost competitive  
3 and more effective methods.

4       And one other thing I just want to mention  
5 because you got to it at the end. MWBE rules are no  
6 longer categorically exempted. So, an executive  
7 order originally issued by Mayor de Blasio and  
8 renewed by Mayor Adams says that agencies may not  
9 categorically exempt emergency procurement from MWBE  
10 participation goals, but that doesn't put them in the  
11 same category as those contracts for which they are  
12 standard and required. We're working on a report  
13 that we'll put out next month. But our preliminary  
14 estimation is that emergency procurement last year  
15 was-- about 5.2% of the value of last year's  
16 emergency procurement was MWBE contracts. That's  
17 about a third of the 15% that we hit in the standard  
18 procurement methods where MWBE is required.

19       Now, Mike Garner and the team are working hard at  
20 it. They really are. I see them, they're working  
21 hard at it. They are trying hard. But obviously  
22 when you make exemptions, when you don't require the  
23 same level of goal or participation setting, you're  
24 going to wind up with lower numbers on-- on average.

1  
2       So the city charter and Procurement Policy Board  
3 rules allow agencies to enter into contracts quickly  
4 to meet the needs of an emergency. But they don't  
5 absolve agencies of the responsibility to select  
6 vendors carefully, to contend to cost considerations  
7 and to perform vendor oversight. One thing that we  
8 did earlier this year was an audit of COVID Emergency  
9 contracting, of both vaccinations and testing, and we  
10 found wildly ranging costs (no surprise), and after  
11 that we issued a guidance memo, a best practices  
12 memo, for ways that agencies can maximize competition  
13 amongst vendors. And I'll give you a few examples of  
14 where we think they could be doing better on that.

15       So for example, the city has five separate  
16 staffing contracts for the asylum-seeker situation.  
17 But we don't know. We can't tell: Are they  
18 comparing the prices of individual staffing type  
19 positions across those contracts, and saying to  
20 Garner, here's what DocGo is giving us for this  
21 position. And you know-- And so you saw that in the  
22 Gotham story about laundry. We've talked about it  
23 around security. You know, a question we've asked  
24 is: When the state started providing state troopers,  
25 did that mean that vendors were directed to provide

3 less paid security, or are we just doubling the  
4 amount of security that we have on a site?

5 So-- So what we did in order to try-- Well, I  
6 guess, let me just give a couple of bits of data  
7 here. And you have this all in your-- Let me  
8 clarify a couple of things first.

9 So last year, on July 29, 2022, the  
10 administration had requested, and we granted this  
11 blanket prior approval, to use emergency procurement  
12 for one or more housing facilities to provide shelter  
13 for asylum seekers, as well as to create the Asylum  
14 Seekers Service Referral Center. Since then, the  
15 administration has relied on that-- that blanket  
16 approval for now, approaching 200 contracts. I guess  
17 I heard them say 204, we've given you the numbers  
18 that we have, as of July 31, which are that we had  
19 received in our office 71 contracts. We see in  
20 Passport in total 194. So that's, you know, 123 more  
21 that haven't made their way to our office and  
22 therefore have not been yet set up in the financial  
23 management system for payment. That authorizes a  
24 total of just over \$5 billion in potential payments.  
25 By far the two largest agencies are Department of  
Homeless Services, and H+H, each at over \$2 billion.

2 No surprise. They are largely for the shelters. But  
3 we identify here in the in the chart.

4 And if you go on our website, you can actually  
5 download the database that's behind this chart that  
6 identifies all of these contracts to the fullest  
7 extent we possibly can. That's what most of the  
8 press are relying on to get in, to dig in, to do the  
9 stories on hotel, on laundry, that we're using in our  
10 cost comparisons as well.

11 I mentioned the multiple staffing contracts.  
12 You've talked a lot about it, so I won't go further  
13 into it because I don't have a lot more to illuminate  
14 on hotel prices.

15 One area that I think is interesting that we're  
16 looking at a little more on is food contracting. One  
17 interesting thing there is the Department of Homeless  
18 Services contracts contain standard provisions for  
19 subcontractors to provide food. That's the normal  
20 way things go at a DHS shelter. And it's the same  
21 way that the sanctuary shelters are set up as well.  
22 But now the Department of Social Services has a  
23 direct contract to provide food at some of these  
24 sites as well. And I think that's in response to  
25 some of the complaints that have been made. But it's

2 not clear to us how those subcontracts for food, and  
3 the direct contracts for food are overlapping. And  
4 there aren't that many institutional food contracting  
5 agencies. So, it may be the case that some of the  
6 same vendors are being contracted and subcontracted.  
7 And again, when you're using multiple agencies and  
8 multiple forms of contracting and subcontracting, it  
9 gets hard to have the same level of visibility.  
10 That's the kind of thing you can find later in an  
11 audit. But we need more real time coordination.  
12 We're stepping up to try to provide what we can.  
13 This hearing, I think, is helping push some of that  
14 as well. But it is a thing that city hall can do  
15 better.

16 You talked a lot about H+H, so I'll skip that  
17 part of the testimony. But just to again say, we did  
18 receive this week what we believe is the most recent  
19 and up-to-date batch of the H+H contracts. We'll  
20 make sure that we update the website, if there's any  
21 new there that we don't already have there, and we  
22 make the contracts available for FOIL, both to the  
23 public, the press, and the Council.

24 Let's talk about DocGo for a minute. As you are  
25 well aware, one emergency contract that has, for good

1 reason, come under particular scrutiny is HPDs  
2 contract with Rapid Reliable Testing and Why LLC  
3 commonly known as DocGo. While DocGo's contract with  
4 HPD-- well, I guess it's a rollback, they are  
5 utilizing the July 29, 2022, blanket prior approval  
6 that we understood to be for housing facilities, and  
7 for that one navigation center, for a contract that  
8 quite arguably extends beyond what that blanket prior  
9 approval spoke to. Some of them or housing  
10 facilities, but that that blanket prior approval did  
11 not speak to anything outside of New York City or to  
12 the wider range of things being-- being done there,  
13 but they're utilizing that blanket prior approval.

14 They started this contract in May 2023. In June,  
15 they approached our office for something pretty  
16 unusual that's called-- it's called a Directive 24  
17 waiver.

18 Normally, you can't get an advance cap payment on  
19 a contract until that contract has been filed and  
20 established in the financial management system, and  
21 is with our office. I think we looked through it.  
22 We had only gotten Directive 24 waiver requests for  
23 two other asylum seeker emergency contracts. One was  
24 at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal. They approached us  
25

2 and said, "We want to get the Brooklyn cruise  
3 terminal for a few months. They're telling us if we  
4 make essentially a down payment, we can secure it.  
5 If not, they're going to have cruise ships keep  
6 coming in." And we determined that was a good  
7 reason. And we authorized an advance cash payment  
8 before the contract had arrived at our office.

9 And then a set of churches and synagogues and  
10 religious organizations wanted also to be able to  
11 make their facilities available. And we granted the  
12 advance payment there.

13 But the DocGo request for this director 24 waiver  
14 was very contradictory because it simultaneously  
15 said, "The reason that we're selecting this vendor is  
16 that they've got significant resources," and then at  
17 the same time, they said, "We won't be able to do  
18 this if you don't give us a \$4 million advance." And  
19 we don't give that almost ever to our nonprofit  
20 organizations. We did not think a publicly traded  
21 company that was being touted as having the  
22 significant cash position, even though we did not see  
23 evidence that they had experience providing the  
24 services was an appropriate use. So this was before  
25

1  
2 any of the things had been in the press, we denied  
3 the Directive 24 cash payment waiver in June.

4       They then-- There's no such thing as final  
5 approval. I know that's a thing that was referred to  
6 on the panel. There's prior approval. There's  
7 something called a written determination, where they  
8 send us a what-- basically a one-pager with the name  
9 of the contract, or the amount of the contract, and  
10 like one sentence on the services being provided.  
11 And they did submit that.

12       The contract then arrived in our office just a  
13 couple of weeks ago in August. It's-- Emergency  
14 contracts are exempted from registration. So  
15 standard contracting: We get the contract, it's got  
16 a 30 day clock, we asked our questions back and  
17 forth, we register it. Emergency contracts are  
18 exempted from registration, so it's not accurate to  
19 say that we register it, or that we grant final  
20 approval. Generally we receive it, and we file it in  
21 the Financial Management System, enabling the agency  
22 to make payments, to receive invoices and make  
23 payments.

24

25



1  
2 We've done that 70 times already. So 70 times on  
3 the-- the contracts that we received, we filed them  
4 and established them for payment.

5 In this case, we had many concerns and  
6 objections. So we returned to the contract HPD with  
7 those questions and objections. We encouraged them  
8 to reconsider the contract, but they instead  
9 exercised the mayor has authority to move forward  
10 with the emergency procurement over our objections.  
11 And we acknowledge that the charter empowers the  
12 mayor to move forward with emergency procurement over  
13 the objections of the Comptroller.

14 And so per a letter that we sent back to HPD this  
15 Monday, we have-- the right word is not "registered"  
16 (we don't register these contracts) We filed the  
17 contract in the Financial Management System, which  
18 will enable HPD to receive and pay invoices as is the  
19 priority-- as is the authority of the Mayor.

20 For the first time, we also simultaneously  
21 launched a real time audit of that contract.  
22 Normally in an audit, you wait till a contract or a  
23 program is done and then go back and look at  
24 everything. And we've said here, we're going to  
25 launch it simultaneously, so that we can review the

2 invoices in real time, see what we're being asked to  
3 pay, make sure we believe those services were  
4 provided, look at some of these questions about who  
5 the subcontractors are, in as real time as we can.  
6 This is new for us. And we'll keep you posted as we  
7 do it.

8 But, you know, we continue to believe there's  
9 just little evidence to suggest that DocGo has the  
10 expertise to provide the services that it has been  
11 contracted for. They're a medical services company,  
12 not a logistics company, a social services provider,  
13 or a legal services provider. And we do continue to  
14 have questions about the subcontracting procedures  
15 which were not sufficiently detailed to our office in  
16 the submission.

17 And then just finally, to conclude, and I really  
18 think in many ways, this is the most useful part of  
19 the hearing.

20 You know, well after a year-- well over a year  
21 after the first increase in asylum seekers arriving  
22 in New York City, there does remain a clear and  
23 demonstrated need for flexibility and urgency as to  
24 the agencies that respond to the continued arrival of  
25 thousands of people here each month. Conditions and

2 situations are changing sometimes for the good, as  
3 the TPS situation shows. That means the legal  
4 services being provided at the application center  
5 will-- will need to shift. So we need the ability to  
6 move that quickly. I've actually been there twice,  
7 once in June and once just a couple of weeks ago, and  
8 was encouraged to see the evolution of services on  
9 site, that I think will result in a much higher  
10 percentage of applications being accepted for asylum  
11 and work authorization, which will enable folks to  
12 get on their feet, and for many of them move out of  
13 shelter, and save the city significant money. So I  
14 both want to praise good work, where it has been  
15 done, and make sure enough flexibility is built into  
16 the city's ability to contract to deliver.

17 But after more than a year, we can't call this  
18 situation unforeseen. And, in light of some of the  
19 concerns identified throughout this hearing, and in  
20 this testimony, my office is currently reviewing  
21 whether blanket-- the blanket prior approval we  
22 granted on July 29, 2022, remains appropriate, or  
23 whether agencies should return to seeking prior  
24 approval for emergency procurement on an individual  
25 contract basis, a process which we utilize with

2 frequency and that we process speedily. And we will  
3 certainly keep the council updated on this review.

4 Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you so much Comptroller.

6 I just have one quick question: Would the mayor be  
7 unable-- would he have been unable to proceed with a  
8 contract over the-- over your objections if the prior  
9 approval was not made? Or does that part allow him  
10 to just steamroll us?

11 COMPTROLLER LANDER: So if-- if we didn't have a  
12 blanket prior approval in place, they come to us for  
13 each individual time they want to do it. So that  
14 would have meant presumably if they entered into that  
15 DocGo contract in May, that either in April or, you  
16 know, in May when they knew they wanted to engage  
17 DocGo, they could have come to us for an individual  
18 prior approval on that specific contract.

19 And we turn those requests around quickly. The  
20 69 asylum seeker prior approvals are within 300--  
21 over 300 prior approvals we've granted this year, and  
22 many of them are on individual bases. You know, some  
23 of those are like a DDC, a construction project where  
24 there's the 22 Reade Street, where they discover  
25 there was a problem with the vault under the street,

3 and they needed to get a construction contractor on  
4 site quickly. And for public safety, they couldn't  
5 go through the bidding process. So, we turn those  
6 around quickly, and we can consider them.

7 But if we decide that it's not an appropriate  
8 situation for emergency procurement, because it  
9 doesn't meet the charter test, they'll need to go--  
10 they would need to go through a standard procurement  
11 process. They can still-- You know, so-- so we have  
12 the authority to say no to emergency procurement.

13 And if we don't grant the prior approval, they  
14 cannot-- because they need it from us and from the  
15 Law Department. If they don't get it from both of  
16 us, they can't proceed. They could then move as  
17 quickly as they can through standard procurement.

18 And they have other procurement methods. You heard  
19 about a lot of them as well today: Open RFPs that  
20 could conduct a bid. There's an accelerated  
21 procurement even within standard procurement. They  
22 can move through those. And we've seen situations--  
23 We rejected a Department of Correction prior approval  
24 for emergency procurement for-- I'm going to get the  
25 details wrong, but in that case, they-- they  
proceeded with a standard procurement, and then

2 brought it to our office. In that case, you know, we  
3 look up at registration to make sure all the rules  
4 were followed. There have been a small handful of  
5 contracts (I think it was 0.2% of standard contracts)  
6 that we did not register. Even in that case, the  
7 Mayor-- the Mayor has an authority to override us if  
8 we don't register the contract. I think Medicare  
9 Advantage is the only one that that has taken place  
10 on in the last-- since the beginning of the term.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much, Mr.  
12 Comptroller. Oh you do? Sorry. Councilmember  
13 Avilés.

14 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Hello, Comptroller. Thank  
15 you so much for your work. I was curious. What I  
16 have, you know, witnessed in many of our sites is  
17 also an additional overlay of NYPD sitting in front  
18 of sites that have these contractors with full  
19 security. How have you looked at, or been able to  
20 discern how much NYPD resources are going, in  
21 addition to the security contracts?

22 COMPTROLLER LANDER: No, it's a good-- You know,  
23 it's-- You know, I know the governor authorized  
24 state troopers for-- for some of them that NYPD are  
25 provided for some of them. DHS has its own security

2 force in some cases. And there is contracted  
3 security as well. Obviously, we want safe and secure  
4 sites. But, is it possible this would be a good  
5 place to review, so that at least we're not spending  
6 all of those things without attention to what  
7 resources are really needed? It seems like a good  
8 idea.

9 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: I agree. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Councilmember Holden?

11 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you very much for  
12 your testimony. Um, let's go-- Let's go to the DocGo  
13 question. You looked at that. You felt that DocGo  
14 couldn't deliver on some of their services, that they  
15 didn't have a track record, right? So that's what  
16 you testified?

17 COMPTROLLER LANDER: When we looked at-- We  
18 didn't see evidence. We asked the agency the  
19 question on, "What do you base the determination that  
20 they do have sufficient experience?" And we did not  
21 see a sound answer to those questions.

22 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Did you check any specific  
23 allegations against DocGo that were republished? For  
24 instance, you know, the-- the Administration  
25 testified that it was really the subcontractors.

2 They said it wasn't DocGo. And DocGo had to vet  
3 them. But did you look at-- because they were kind  
4 of denying that that really happened, a lot of the  
5 published reports happened. Did you find anything  
6 else?

7       COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, we were only reviewing  
8 the process of procurement. We haven't yet started  
9 really looking at services provided under the  
10 contract. You know, that will begin as part of our  
11 audit. We had identified concerns and weaknesses  
12 about subcontracting. One of the things that we said  
13 to the agency in our return memo is: We would like  
14 to-- We don't see clarity on what their procedures  
15 are for vetting and-- and ensuring the integrity of  
16 their subcontractors. We had actually identified  
17 that as a flaw in the subcontract before the  
18 Secretary Of State then said, "Here are two security  
19 subcontractors that don't seem to have licensed their  
20 security guards."

21       So it is something that we're concerned about.  
22 It is something we'll be looking at as we turn to the  
23 audit. But we haven't specifically checked the  
24 allegations in the procurement.



1  
2 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: But just one follow up.  
3 Just-- So do you-- You had, kind of, doubts on this  
4 contract to begin with, the emergency contract in the  
5 early days of it. I guess it was May.

6 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Uh, it was in June that we--  
7 we didn't-- I mean, they entered into it in May. We  
8 received that first Directive 24 waiver in June.

9 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: All right, so who's  
10 responsible then for looking at delivery of the  
11 services. Because you said you just looked at the,  
12 you know, procurement.

13 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, we will, as part of  
14 the audit that we are now commencing, begin to do  
15 that.

16 I mean, in general, with procurement, the  
17 procuring agency has the responsibility for oversight  
18 throughout the contract. So in this case, HPD has  
19 the responsibility for-- You know, they'll review  
20 each invoice and sign off for payment. We're not  
21 generally involved in the invoicing and payment  
22 process. So, an agency enters into a contract, and  
23 then the agency has the responsibility for making  
24 sure that the invoices are appropriate, that the  
25

2 services were provided, and for addressing any  
3 challenges.

4 We can take a look at that in an audit. The  
5 attorney general or DOI can obviously come in, but  
6 the standard responsibility to do it in every case  
7 sits with the contracting agency.

8 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: I don't know if you heard  
9 in the beginning, the Chair saying that the not for  
10 profits were told not to come to this hearing.  
11 What's your reaction to that?

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The for-profits. The for-  
13 profits.

14 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Oh, the for-profits?

15 CHAIRPERSON WON: For-profits and one nonprofit.

16 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. Well, the for-  
17 profits were-- were not-- they were told not to come  
18 to the hearing.

19 CHAIRPERSON WON: To testify, by the Admin.

20 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: To testify.

21 COMPTROLLER LANDER: I mean, generally at a  
22 Council public hearing, it's my experience that the  
23 Council welcomes everyone relevant to come and  
24 testify.

2 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Right. That's part of our  
3 duty. Right. But that's part of our duties as  
4 councilmembers.

5 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Of course.

6 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: So what's your reaction to  
7 that?

8 COMPTROLLER LANDER: I mean, I don't think it's  
9 good to try to prevent people from giving public  
10 testimony that helps the Council illuminate important  
11 issues.

12 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you, Mr. Comptroller.

14 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And I believe we have three  
16 people from the public?

17 Oh. Councilmember Ariola, go ahead.

18 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: No. We have one more.  
19 Just me. Thank you so much.

20 So in light of everything that you've just said,  
21 will your office be more judicious and proactive in  
22 auditing city contracts before filing? And will the  
23 office increase its vigilance in returning contracts  
24 when they are apparent-- when there are apparent  
25 improprieties or inconsistencies?

3           COMPTRROLLER LANDER: So let me distinguish  
4 between auditing, which is once something's in  
5 operation, and the review we do of contracts through  
6 the procurement process.

7           Those are just two separate divisions. We've got  
8 like a set of folks that look at whether the  
9 procurement process has been appropriate, whether  
10 it's emergency procurement or standard procurement,  
11 and then we have auditors who go look at things that  
12 are in operation. So for-- On the question,  
13 particularly of this hearing of emergency  
14 procurement, as I said in my testimony, we are  
15 considering whether the blanket prior approval that  
16 gives the administration the ability to move forward  
17 with emergency procurement without seeking it  
18 individually on each contract from our office remains  
19 appropriate or not. And that's under scrutiny to  
20 figure out whether we should have them returned to  
21 seeking prior approval on an individual contract  
22 basis, and we will report to you soon on what we  
23 determined in that process.

24           We have started not just the DocGo audit, but a  
25 couple of audits in this space. You know, as the  
procurement has grown there, and as a lot of spending

2 is taking place there, I suspect that we will be--  
3 you know, we-- there was no way we could audit-- you  
4 know, we only have-- you know, we only have a  
5 limited team of auditors. The charter requires us to  
6 audit every single city agency, even every one of the  
7 59 Community Boards once every four years. So we  
8 couldn't audit anywhere near all of these contracts.  
9 But we are going to work hard to be vigilant on them.

10 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: I appreciate it. Thank  
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Councilmember Vernikov?

13 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you, Mr.  
14 Comptroller. I asked this question previously, but I  
15 didn't get an answer. So I was wondering if maybe  
16 you can help us. In terms of the services provided,  
17 can you just list the services that are included in  
18 the DotGo contract?

19 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Um, let me follow up and--  
20 and get that answer to you. Because there are some--  
21 What I remember from my read of the contract a couple  
22 of days ago is that there are some that are  
23 essentially within the specific scope of services.  
24 And there are some that are authorized that could be  
25 added to the scope of services by HPD. And I just

2 want to make sure that we get that right. So let me  
3 make sure that we get an answer to the Chair and to  
4 you on this.

5 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Yeah, thank you. I just  
6 I was wondering, in terms of costs, specific-- how  
7 much the specific services cost? Because it's a  
8 pretty large sum of money, \$432 million. So I was  
9 just wondering how that's justified. And if you  
10 could...?

11 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, this is one of the  
12 questions that we asked, and were one of the  
13 objections we had on the contract: We didn't see a  
14 basis for the \$432 million. We weren't clear what  
15 that was based on, how-- you know, how much-- What  
16 are you providing? And how have you determined that  
17 \$432 million is the right amount of money? And we  
18 didn't get an answer that was clear.

19 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: So was that not in the  
20 contract?

21 COMPTROLLER LANDER: The contract--

22 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: You did review the  
23 contract, right?

24 COMPTROLLER LANDER: We-- I did review the  
25 contract. And they sent an answer to the questions

1 that we asked, that we can provide you information on  
2 as well.  
3

4 But the way that the contract is structured,  
5 there's a total dollar amount. Some things have  
6 individual prices, like the \$170 a night for a hotel  
7 room. Some services specifically says, "DocGo will  
8 provide the city under this contract." And then  
9 there's other things (for example legal services)  
10 that are authorized that the city could seek to have  
11 the-- have them provide but that are not specifically  
12 required under the scope of services.

13 So, let me get you you know, just you know, a  
14 more specific set of answers about what are the  
15 mandated-- you know, what contracts are specific  
16 under the contract-- services specifically required  
17 under the contract, which ones could be added at HPDs  
18 discretion, and as much information as as we see in  
19 the contract, about what the cost is.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

21 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you.

22 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you very much.

23 COUNSEL: Thank you, Mr. Comptroller. Okay,  
24 thank you Chairs, and thank you to the Comptroller.

1  
2 We will now turn to public testimony. For in-  
3 person panelists, please come up to the dais once  
4 your name has been called. For virtual panelists  
5 will be calling on individuals one by one to testify.  
6 We will be limiting public testimony today to two  
7 minutes each. Please begin once the sergeant has  
8 started the timer. First, we will hear from Emily  
9 Alexiou, followed by Raul Rivera, and then  
10 Christopher Leon Johnson. If you could please come  
11 up to the dais, and we'll get started.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go right ahead.

13 MS. ALEXIOU: Thank you. As everyone sitting in  
14 this room recognizes and has spoken about today, the  
15 city has been in the midst of a year-long  
16 humanitarian crisis. The vast majority of New  
17 Yorkers stand in support of our current migrants, but  
18 there is no denying that the support has come at a  
19 huge cost to the city at millions per day.

20 As city leadership has acknowledged, the greatest  
21 hope for alleviating the financial burden, including  
22 billions already spent is by obtaining federal money.  
23 But while it seems the city has pinned its hopes on  
24 obtaining this money, they have not yet ensured any



1 of this spending will ultimately qualify for federal  
2 reimbursement.  
3

4 Federal Funding comes with federal regulations.  
5 Without federally-compliant spending. The City will  
6 be right back to where to- to where they started with  
7 New Yorkers footing the bill. The following steps  
8 must be immediately taken to change course and set  
9 the city up to benefit from federal funding.

10 One, the city must immediately begin the process  
11 of creating a federally compliant program in which  
12 all contracts align with federal reimbursement. Many  
13 of the contracts awarded by the city are not  
14 compliant with federal regulations. Without this,  
15 the billions of dollars currently being spent will be  
16 ineligible for reimbursement.

17 Second, the city must immediately develop a  
18 compliance and monitoring oversight process, which  
19 would hold all contractors accountable, ensure  
20 program performance, provide transparency to all New  
21 Yorkers, and root out fraud, waste, and abuse.

22 And last, the city must immediately cease using  
23 Emergency procurements. The city has awarded no-bid  
24 contracts on an emergency basis. While  
25 understandable at the time, no contractor or vendor

2 should be operating under a no-bid or sole source  
3 contract in 2023. Federal regulations understand the  
4 need for emergency procurements, but not more than a  
5 year later. The migrant crisis will continue to be  
6 an issue impacting every New Yorker, requiring  
7 ongoing attention. CohnReznick stands prepared to  
8 assist the city of New York.

9 Thank you for your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. Go  
11 ahead, sir.

12 MR. JOHNSON: All right. My name is Christopher  
13 Leon Johnson. And I'm going to say this right now.  
14 I say this on Twitter. I say this on Facebook. The  
15 way we've got to end this-- this crap that the city,  
16 and the state, and the City Council is doing with  
17 this migrant crisis. You got to close the border.  
18 You know, you got to close the border. And you have  
19 to send them back. Like this is unsustainable. I'm  
20 going to tell us right now this is real, like  
21 ridiculous, right? We're spending all this money.  
22 Biden is only given like pennies to the million  
23 dollar we are spending. And all we see with the City  
24 Council and all these elected officials, including  
25

2 the right wing, and including the clown, Inna  
3 Vernikov, that left, and only cares about trying to--

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Sir, please--

5 MR. JOHNSON: No. I don't care. Hey, I've got  
6 to say, I respect you guys, but I'd say Inna Vernikov  
7 was a clown. She only cares about out the photo op.  
8 Vote her out. Vote for somebody else on November 7.  
9 But I'm going to say this right now, we got to stop  
10 the photo ops, we got to stop the crap, and we got to  
11 just send them back and turn away, because this is  
12 unsustainable. Like-- and what Brad Lander did  
13 recently with the-- with the DocGo audit, that was  
14 nothing but throwing us a bone. That was BS. That  
15 was crap. Like Brad Lander is a joke. He doesn't  
16 know what he doing. He's got to go. We've got vote  
17 him out. And I hope Bob Holden runs against him in  
18 2025, for Comptroller, because this is getting  
19 ridiculous, all right? This is-- This panel isn't  
20 going to do anything, but just-- it's nothing but  
21 show, and just throwing us a bone, saying, "Oh, act  
22 like you all care." You all don't give a crap,  
23 because if you all cared, you'd be all out there  
24 saying we need to close the border, and Biden, if you  
25 don't do what we tell you, we're going to vote you

2 out, and we're going to vote for Donald Trump in  
3 2024. And that's all we've got to do. So I'm done.  
4 And this is all I got to say. And like I say, close  
5 the border, and send them back. So-- and vote for  
6 Donald Trump in 2024. So that's it. Take care.

7 MR. RIVERIA: Go ahead, sir. Good afternoon. My  
8 name is Raul Rivera. I'm a TLC driving a TLC driver  
9 advocate. I was here listening to-- listening to  
10 some of the testimony. And somebody mentioned Arrow,  
11 they mentioned Arrow security. I worked for Arrow.  
12 They just fired me on 9/11. There's their badge. On  
13 9/11, I asked for 60 seconds of silence for the  
14 victims of 9/11. And because they say I didn't ask  
15 for permission, I was fired. And I'll tell you right  
16 now, I wasn't making \$72,000 a year. \$16.70. But  
17 putting that aside, we are really concerned on the  
18 things that we're hearing here in a city. I haven't  
19 heard American, or New Yorker, or citizen. Nobody's  
20 protecting us. We got to come out and fight on our  
21 own. We're losing our city. Nobody's doing nothing  
22 for us. Everything is for the migrants. If you say  
23 one thing about an illegal, you're on the right,  
24 you're a racist. You're controlling the language in  
25 this Council. And that is absolutely not right. We

1  
2 are not racist. We are for migrants. Legal  
3 migration. We say close the border. We tell Speaker  
4 Adams, if you want to be a leader, you got to stand  
5 on your own two feet and say that: Close the border.  
6 Protect New Yorkers. Do you hear that? That's  
7 common sense. Can you say that Councilmember? Can  
8 you say close the border? We challenge you. Say  
9 close the border. Can you say that? Apparently you  
10 can't say that. You see, that's one of the issues  
11 that we have in here. You don't have a voice for the  
12 New Yorker. We say close the border. Legal  
13 migration. No discrimination. Justice for all.  
14 Protect the New Yorker. Can you say close the  
15 border?

16 If you can't--

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Sir--

18 MR. RIVERA: If you gave up on our city, we  
19 won't. We won't give up on our city. If the Mayor  
20 gives up on our city, we will not. He already  
21 surrendered. He already bowed down. We will not  
22 surrender our city. I'm a native New Yorker. This  
23 is my city.

24 CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you.

25 MR. RIVERA: I love my city.

1 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. RIVERA: And we're going to fight tooth and  
3 nail.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you.

6 MR. RIVERA: Close the border.

7 CHAIRPERSON WON: Just to make sure it's on the  
8 record, we do not believe in closing the border and  
9 they are legally here, because they're asylum seekers  
10 and migrants protected by law. Thank you.

11 MR. RIVERA: They're not all legal. 99% of them  
12 are here for money reasons.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Thank you very much.  
14 Thank you.

15 COUNSEL: We will now call up our final panelist.  
16 It's a virtual panelist. Once name has been called a  
17 member of our staff will unmute you and the sergeant  
18 at arms will set the timer and give you the go ahead  
19 to begin. The final panelist today is Alana  
20 Tornello. Mr. Anello you may begin when the  
21 sergeant announces the time.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 MS. TORNELLO: Good afternoon my name is Alana  
24 with the Human Services Council. We're a coalition  
25 of over 170 human services organizations in NYC,

3 including many who served directly people seeking  
4 asylum, and we are among New Yorkers embracing and  
5 fighting for all of our neighbors, including our  
6 newest neighbors seeking asylum, contrary to two of  
7 the former testimonies. We urge the city to expand  
8 direct investment in community legal services, case  
9 management, permanent housing pathways, and more for  
10 asylum seekers. This is necessary along with urgent  
11 federal resources and actions, like expedited work  
12 authorizations, and expanded TPS.

13 Since last summer, HSC and partners have  
14 advocated for these policies which have since been  
15 taken on by the Mayor and Governor, but we also  
16 repeatedly called for more coordination and direct  
17 funding for human services that help move asylum  
18 seekers out of a state of crisis, and we have not  
19 seen the necessary progress there.

20 Public data on contracting for services to asylum  
21 seekers show significantly more total investment in  
22 largely opaque for-profit contracts than in  
23 transparent community partnerships, and this includes  
24 some unqualified vendors offering social services  
25 which was especially painful for our sector to  
witness because professional human services workers

3 show up every day without comparable funds or just  
4 pay to support both asylum seekers and other New  
5 Yorkers in need.

6 Better investments and an exhausted human  
7 services infrastructure are smart, but they are the  
8 opposite of the recently announced budget cuts. We  
9 don't agree that New York City must choose either  
10 adequately funded human services for asylum seekers.  
11 The cost cited to justify that has since been  
12 challenged. It pits communities in need against our  
13 newest neighbors, fueling further xenophobia and  
14 hatred, as we just heard, and there are other options  
15 for fund reallocation.

16 We outline recommendations in our testimony for  
17 expedited, transparent, and direct contracting for  
18 comprehensive human services. This includes to  
19 significantly ramp up multi-year legal  
20 representation, expand navigation into sustained care  
21 management, offer longer term affordable housing  
22 solutions, and invest in workforce development  
23 programs.

24 Human services organizations have already  
25 designed innovations to help people transition out of



1 a state of crisis, with limited to no resources from  
2 the city in many cases. To do the right thing--

3  
4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired. Thank  
5 you.

6 MS. TORNELLO: May I complete my thought?

7 COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead. Thank you. To do the  
8 right thing, city leaders need to support and scale  
9 up these community solutions, because contracting  
10 directly with community organizations not only helps  
11 our newest neighbors. It strengthens support systems  
12 that New Yorkers already need.

13 Thank you. And please refer to our written  
14 testimony and past testimonies.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. I want  
16 to thank all of the persons who helped put this  
17 amazing hearing together, particularly staff, my  
18 amazing colleague, Councilmember Julie Won, and we  
19 promise you that this will be followed up on until we  
20 get answers, and we're able to help the people in the  
21 city of New York with the best contract for the best  
22 money.

23 COUNSEL: Okay, sorry, Chair. I just want to  
24 announce quickly for the record, Hilldane Colon and  
25 Adam Abbah, are either of you available on Zoom?

2 Seeing neither being available I'll turn it back  
3 to the chairs for a quick wrap.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. This  
5 hearing concludes.

6 [GAVEL]

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you Gale.

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9 Thank you, Gail.

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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 09/29/2023