

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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Thursday, January 16, 2025
Start: 10:21 a.m.
Recess: 4:48 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Hon. Alexa Avilés, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams
Erik D. Bottcher
Gale A. Brewer
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Shahana K. Hanif
Rita C. Joseph
Shekar Krishnan

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

A P P E A R A N C E S

Manuel Castro
Commissioner - Mayor's Office of Immigrant
Affairs (MOIA)

Lorena Lucero,
Chief Policy Advisor - Mayor's Office of
Immigrant Affairs (MOIA)

Rebecca Engel,
Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs and
Research - Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
(MOIA)

Molly Schaeffer,
Executive Director of the Office of Asylum
Seeker Operations (OASO)

Enrique Chavira Cantu,
Senior Policy Adviser for Federal Immigration -
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Kelly Yzique-Zea,
Director of Immigration Policy for the Office of
Asylum Seeker Operations (OASO)

Catalina Cruz,
New York State Assembly, Representing the 39th
Assembly District in Queens

Claudia Valdivia,
Community Leader, Mixteco Organization

Dhaliem Alban,
Youth Member and Lead Organizer at Make the Road
New York

Ximena Bustamante,
Representative of Undocumented Women's Fund

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Kelvin Servita Arocha,
(*Testimony Presented by Bronx Defenders Staff)

Garfield Green,
Families for Freedom

Abou Cissé,
Member African Communities Together

Miral Abbas,
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Families (CACF)

Justin Srey,
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Deborah Lee,
Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law Unit at
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Leidis De La Rosa
Organizing Coordinator at La Colmena

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

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Director of the Immigration Practice at Brooklyn
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Karla Ostalza,
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Jennifer V. (As translated by Brianna Abreu,
Center for Family Representation)

Tania Mattos,
Executive Director of UnLocal

Ingrid Rojas,
Worker's Justice Project

Wendy Vintimilla,
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Antonio Solis,
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Lauren Migliaccio,
Legal Technical Assistance Director at Immigrant
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Thinley Wangchuk,
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Lauren Reiff,
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COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Rosa Cohen-Cruz,
Director of Immigration Policy at The Bronx
Defenders

Keighly Rector, Esq.
Director Immigration Project Volunteers of Legal
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Margaret Martin,
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Division at Catholic Charities Community Services

Sierra Kraft,
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Zachary Ahmed,
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Union (NYCLU)

Marie Mark, Executive Director,
Immigrant Defense Project

Mackenna Vickery,
Paralegal at The Door's Legal Services Center

Ashley Peguero,
Manager for the Queens Community Program at the
Violence Intervention Program (VIP)

Taina Wagnac,
Senior Manager of State and Local Policy at the
New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)

Sophie Dalsimer,
Co-Director of Health Justice,
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI)

Alison Wilkey,
Director of Government Affairs and Strategic
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COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
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Juan Diaz
Policy Associate at Citizens' Committee for
Children of New York

Manuela Osorio,
Digital Organizer at Latino Justice PRLDEF

Jade Vasquez,
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Inc. (WIN)

Alexandra Millatmal,
Community Organizer from Afghans For A Better
Tomorrow

Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez,
Deputy Director at the Street Vendor Project

Isis Mireles,
Street Vendor Project

Marlene Ansaldo,
Street Vendor Project

Ahmed Murad,
Street Vendor

Cynthia Katz,
Managing Attorney at HIAS

Lisha Luo Cai,
Advocacy Coordinator at Asian American Federation

Kevin Lee,
REVCORP CORPS for the Emancipation of Humanity;
Revolution Books in Harlem

Raul Rivera, self

Maggie Sanchez,
Citywide Council for Special Education

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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

Jonathan Lam,
Community Organizing Coordinator of New York
Refugee and Migrants Rights Task Force

Darnell Benoit,
Founder of Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

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COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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SERGEANT HUANG: Sound check for the Committee on Immigration; today's date is January 16, 2025. Being recorded by Danny Huang in the Council Chambers.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, good morning, welcome to the hearing on the Committee on Immigration. At this time, please all silence electronics and do not approach the dais - at this time, please do not approach the dais.

If you need to sign up online, you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov, once again, that is testimony@council.nyc.gov.

If you wish to testify in person, and have not already filled out a witness card, please do so at the back of the room with the Sergeant at Arms.

TRANSLATORS: Hearing introduction and instructions - (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE).

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Once again, just a reminder, there is no standing, photography, or video in the balcony. You need to be seated to record up in the balcony, thank you. Also, take your time, and please silence all electronic devices. Any private conversations, we ask you to, please, take outside of the Chambers.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: (GAVELING IN)

This hearing is called to order.

Good morning, everyone, I am Council Member Alexa Avilés, chair of the Committee on Immigration. Thank you for joining us today.

Today, we will be examining New York City's protections and resources for immigrant communities.

I'd like to thank the representatives from the administration, members of the public, and my council colleagues who have joined us here today, including Council Member Hudson, Council Member Brewer, Council Member Hanif, Council Member Nurse, Council Member De La Rosa, and Council Member Joseph.

The following languages are available for interpretation in the for the in person hearing attendees and for those following along on the Council's website: Spanish, Haitian Creole, Arabic, French, and Bangla.

The following languages are also available for interpretation for the in person hearing attendees: in Mandarin, Pulaar, and Wolof.

New York City always has been and always will be a city of immigrants. Now more than ever, we must come together to protect our immigrant neighbors.

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2 With inauguration day on Monday, we are on the
3 precipice of a presidential term that has promised to
4 sow chaos, instill fear, and enact a program of mass
5 deportation and family separation in immigrant
6 communities.

7 We must be clear-eyed about the dangers ahead of
8 us, and we must be clear in affirming our values and
9 positive vision for a city that safeguards and
10 empowers immigrants to thrive alongside New Yorkers.

11 For centuries, this city has been a beacon for
12 families across the globe who have sought freedom
13 from persecution, a better future for their children,
14 and the ability to earn a living with dignity.

15 With today's oversight hearing, the Committee on
16 Immigration will examine our city's protections and
17 resources for immigrant communities.

18 For those individuals who are directly impacted
19 by federal immigration policies and wish to testify
20 today but are uncomfortable with sharing their full
21 name in this public hearing, please feel free to
22 write your first name only on the witness slip.

23 In the face of draconian immigration policies,
24 New York City has risen to the occasion to protect
25 our communities in the past.

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2 In 2017, under the leadership of former Speaker
3 Melissa Mark-Viverito, the Council worked with the
4 administration, and Mayor Bill de Blasio to codify
5 our sanctuary protections, to expand the role of the
6 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, also known as
7 MOIA, to protect immigrant students and consumers,
8 and to safeguard the privacy of all New Yorkers,
9 regardless of citizenship or immigration status.

10 Because of these legal fortifications, the City
11 cannot collude with ICE in enacting Donald Trump's
12 promised family separation schemes.

13 MOIA should be proud of its history of working
14 alongside the Council to fortify sanctuary
15 protections and safeguard our immigrant communities.

16 New Yorkers need their city government to exhibit
17 that same leadership now. This council remains ready
18 to work with MOIA to stand up against the oppressive
19 immigration policies, to work alongside our immigrant
20 neighbors, and to protect our community's future.

21 We have a responsibility as leaders to champion
22 and publicly combat misconceptions about our
23 protective laws.

24 These laws, also known as sanctuary laws, have
25 promoted public safety, have saved the city money,

1
2 have enhanced trust in local government, and has kept
3 families together and safe for years, including
4 during the last Trump administration.

5 We look forward to hearing what MOIA is doing in
6 its convening role to help other agencies and offices
7 uphold our local laws, to provide resources to
8 community members, organize alongside our sanctuary
9 jurisdictions, and advocate for favorable immigration
10 policies.

11 We also look forward to hearing how the Office of
12 Asylum Seeker Operations is applying the City's local
13 laws pertaining to data and privacy and access to
14 private areas of city property in specific contexts
15 like the quasi shelter system for immigrant newcomers
16 and the Asylum Application Help Center.

17 New York City must not, and I repeat, New York
18 City must not, should not be complicit in Donald
19 Trump's deportation dragnet and quite frankly,
20 xenophobic extremist and racist agenda.

21 That is the minimum New Yorkers should require of
22 our city government. But we have done, and must
23 continue to do, so much more to protect and support
24 our immigrant communities - From funding immigration
25 legal services and Know Your Rights trainings to

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2 providing best practice guidance on language access
3 services, the City has a long legacy of ensuring that
4 our immigrants not only survive but truly thrive.

5 We know employees of MOIA and OASO have dedicated
6 themselves to upholding this tradition. We thank them
7 for their work, and we call on the mayoral
8 administration not to abandon this legacy of which
9 New Yorkers should be quite proud, but to affirm it,
10 to uphold it to the fullest extent of the law. No
11 rollbacks, no workarounds.

12 We look forward to working with the mayoral
13 administration, again, to affirm, not only with
14 words, but with actions that New York will not be
15 complicit in the president elect's program to harm
16 our communities, to separate families, and to destroy
17 neighborhoods.

18 Instead, we remain ready to collaborate with the
19 mayoral administration to uphold these protective
20 laws, to fund legal services and Know Your Rights,
21 and to focus on empowering the working people of this
22 city.

23 Lastly, the Committee On Immigration will hear
24 two bills that I'm proud to be a cosponsor of:
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2 The first is Preconsidered Resolution, sponsored
3 by Council Member Shahana Hanif, calling on the New
4 York State Legislature to reintroduce and pass, and
5 the Governor to sign, the New York for All Act, which
6 would prohibit and regulate the discovery and
7 disclosure of immigration status by New York state
8 and local government entities.

9 The second is Preconsidered Resolution, sponsored
10 by Council Member Crystal Hudson, calling on the New
11 York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to
12 sign the Access to Representation Act, which
13 establishes the right to legal counsel in immigration
14 court proceedings and provides for the administration
15 thereof.

16 The Committee on Immigration passed different
17 versions of these resolutions in 2022 and 2023,
18 respectively, and our renewed consideration of these
19 bills underscores the urgency of passing the same
20 state level legislation this session.

21 I'm grateful to Council Members Hanif and Hudson
22 for introducing their bills and focusing relentlessly
23 on safety and justice for immigrant New Yorkers and
24 all New Yorkers.

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2 I would like to thank all the committee staff for
3 their work on this hearing, including Nicole Catá,
4 Legislative Counsel; Rebecca Barilla, Policy Analyst;
5 Carolina Gil, Principal Finance Analyst; Florentine
6 Kabore, Finance Unit Head - and, finally, I must
7 thank my staff: Edward Cerna, Chief of Staff;
8 Christina Bottego, Deputy Chief of Staff; Winnie
9 Marion, Communications Director; and Cate Byrne,
10 Legislative Fellow, and everyone who works in the
11 background to make this hearing run smoothly.

12 I will now turn it over to the Public Advocate,
13 Jumaane Williams, for his remarks.

14 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you very much,
15 Madam Chair.

16 As mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams, Public
17 Advocate for the city of New York. Thank you, Chair
18 Avilés, and members of the Committee on Immigration
19 for holding this hearing and for allowing me to share
20 my statement.

21 Many immigrants have been anxious as a new
22 federal administration is around the corner, and
23 talks of deportation, denaturalization, and
24 dismantling of the existing immigration system become
25 louder and louder. When you throw in a mayor that has

1 failed to condemn any of this rhetoric and is
2 seemingly amenable to some of the changes, immigrants
3 have a right to feel this way.

4
5 New York City has always been a city of
6 immigrants as is the country. More than one-third of
7 New York City residents are immigrants; over one
8 million New Yorkers are part of a mixed-status
9 household, a quarter of whom are children.

10 Fanning the flames of anti-immigrant rhetoric not
11 only threatens immigrants, including naturalized
12 citizens, but also their U.S. born loved ones.

13 These policies impact all New Yorkers. I
14 understand the news has amplified fears of immigrants
15 committing crimes, yet research shows that there is
16 no correlation between the immigrant share of the
17 population and the total crime rate in any state.

18 Some of this inflammatory sentiment within New
19 York City is in response to the hundreds of thousands
20 of migrants who arrived in our city over the past
21 three years.

22 While over 250,000 migrants have interfaced with
23 city agencies, including the shelter system,
24 approximately 55,000 remain in the City's care.

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2 With the migrant census steadily declining as
3 individuals become self sufficient or seek
4 opportunities beyond the city, while some have taken
5 this opportunity to latch onto neighborhood to
6 sorry... to heighten xenophobia, racism, and fear
7 mongering, I continue to see an opportunity for our
8 newest New Yorkers to become integrated into the
9 fabric of our city.

10 New York City is a Sanctuary City, meaning there
11 are some safeguards to protect the millions of
12 immigrants who call it home by limiting interaction
13 and cooperation with federal immigration enforcement,
14 which, of course, Sanctuary City just talks about
15 coordination - it does not mean that ICE cannot be in
16 the city.

17 ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, still
18 holds the power to arrest anyone that's suspected of
19 being undocumented. This tremendous power means that
20 we, as a city, must fulfill... must fully be prepared
21 to keep federal agents from pursuing Donald Trump's
22 dangerous agenda in New York City.

23 Donald Trump, (UNINTELLIGIBLE) Project 2025, will
24 threaten to repeal policies that prevent ICE from
25 making arrests at schools, hospitals, and churches.

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2 Our schools must continue to serve as a fortress
3 for every student. City agencies must be specifically
4 trained on how to interact with ICE, ensuring that
5 ICE agents cannot work outside of the boundaries set
6 by our local laws.

7 And to be clear, regardless of what the mayor
8 says, we do actually coordinate with ICE in about a
9 150 crimes where people have been convicted, and that
10 that coordination is allowed. That includes violent
11 crimes.

12 Unfortunately, I mayor either doesn't understand
13 it or is purposely misinforming the public.

14 We need to do more in the city to provide newly
15 arrived individuals and families with more resources
16 that enable them to defend their rights. The Mayor's
17 Office of Immigrant Affairs must update and widely
18 disseminate information about the programs that are
19 so boldly touted on his website.

20 Our number one priority should always be to
21 protect the rights of all New Yorkers regardless of
22 their race, primary language, gender, age, or
23 immigration status.

24 I also wish to emphasize and recognize the
25 humanity of our immigrant New Yorkers. To leave your

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2 home country to seek better opportunities, safety,
3 and stability is no small feat, yet millions of New
4 Yorkers have done exactly this for centuries,
5 including my family and my parents. (INAUDIBLE)
6 resulted in a vibrant city whose commitment,
7 cultures, and traditions make it what it is today.

8 Our city will always be seen as a diverse
9 microcosm to the world and a beacon of hope,
10 mobility, and belonging. Because of its long history
11 of welcoming immigrants, protecting such a large
12 populace is imperative, and even in the face of an
13 uphill battle, we must persist, and we must not let
14 them down.

15 I do want to just add, I want to make sure I lift
16 up the plight of Black immigrant New Yorkers, uh, who
17 receive, as usual, unfortunately, the brunt of a lot
18 of this, including, deportations and not having
19 access to the city.

20 Lastly, I just want to say, the mayor continues
21 to point at the \$6 billion that was spent on
22 migrants. As a long term New Yorker myself, I just
23 want to tell long term New Yorkers that I understand
24 why you would be angry - I just want you to be angry
25 at the right people.

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2 So the next time you hear that, you should ask
3 the leaders why didn't they (sic), because that money
4 has always been here. Those of us who are here in
5 this Council have always said we have the money we
6 need if we believe that our long term New Yorkers
7 were in crisis - a long time before the migrants got
8 here - do not allow people this divisive rhetoric. It
9 just is not true. They are not the ones that made
10 those decisions. Leaders made those decisions. We
11 always have that money, and we still have that money
12 if we view certain issues as crises. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Public Advocate
14 Williams.

15 I will now turn it over to Council Member Hanif
16 for her opening statement about her bill.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chair Avilés.

18 Good morning, everyone. I'm Council Member,
19 Shahana Hanif. I'm the proud daughter of Bangladeshi
20 immigrants who made Brooklyn their home.

21 I'm here today to speak on my Preconsidered
22 Resolution, T2025-2970, which urges the State
23 Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, the
24 New York for All Act.

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2 If passed, the New York for All Act would
3 prohibit state and local resources from being used
4 for federal immigration enforcement purposes.

5 Thank you to Chair Avilés for being a cosponsor
6 of this resolution, adding to today's Agenda and
7 leading this important hearing.

8 Our communities in New York City have been made
9 safer by policies that curtail city agency
10 collaboration with Immigration and Customs
11 Enforcement - ICE.

12 These protections have enabled immigrant New
13 Yorkers to perform critical functions without the
14 fear of deportation. This could look like a survivor
15 of domestic violence accessing life saving support
16 services. It could be a worker or tenant reporting
17 unsafe conditions at their job site or residence, or
18 it could be a community member notifying a first
19 responder about a neighbor who is in danger.

20 The state would strongly benefit from adopting
21 similar policies, especially given the incoming
22 presidential administration's mass deportation
23 agenda.

24 On the city level, we have also more to do to
25 ensure our sanctuary policies serve their intended

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2 purpose. While city agencies are legally limited from
3 coordinating with ICE, the lack of enforcement
4 mechanisms for these policies undermine their impact.

5 Previous hearings of the Committee have shined a
6 light on prohibited communications between ICE and
7 city agencies like the New York Police Department,
8 Department of Corrections, and ACS.

9 Currently, victims of illegal information
10 sharing, have no path for remedy or recourse.
11 Additionally, the Administration has no incentive to
12 comply with our local laws, which is deeply
13 concerning given Mayor Adams' stated intent to roll
14 back due process protections for immigrants and his
15 recent remarks that he and incoming boarder czar, Tom
16 Homan, share the same goals.

17 My bill, Intro 214, would address these issues by
18 creating a private right of action for our sanctuary
19 laws. This is one of the most important steps our
20 city could take to defend our neighborhoods from
21 president elect Trump's deportation machine that
22 seeks to tear our communities apart.

23 While the bill is not on today's agenda, it's
24 relevant today's oversight topic, and I want to take
25 this opportunity to encourage my colleagues to join

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2 the 25 council members who have sponsored this
3 legislation. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Council Member
5 Hudson for her opening statement about her bill.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so much.

7 In 2023, I passed a Local Law to expand the Right
8 to Counsel to all people over the age of 65
9 regardless of income. And also in 2023, I passed
10 Resolution 556 urging the State Legislature to pass
11 and the Governor to sign the Access to Representation
12 or S999A/A170A.

13 It is my sincere belief that we should do all in
14 our power to give the most marginalized and
15 vulnerable New Yorkers access to free legal services.
16 And, as a city, we have rejected the idea that
17 immigrants facing deportation or detention should be
18 denied civil and legal protections.

19 Now more than ever, we need the state to pass
20 this vital legislation to show that it too stands
21 with immigrant communities across New York.

22 We've witnessed the disturbing rise in xenophobia
23 across the nation. And in just a few days, we will
24 see the start of a presidential administration that
25 ran on a platform of dehumanizing immigrants, one

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2 that has promised to strip even more rights from an
3 already vulnerable population.

4 But in New York, we know the truth. Without
5 immigrants, the city would simply not run.

6 That's why alongside Chair Avilés, I'm
7 introducing another resolution urging our state
8 legislators to pass a S.999/A.170.

9 The Access to Representation Act guarantees the
10 right to legal representation regardless of
11 citizenship status, and it is crucial to protecting
12 all New Yorkers from the threats that endanger their
13 safety and fundamental rights. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Council Member
15 Hudson.

16 I will now turn it over to the committee counsel
17 to administer the oath before we hear from the
18 mayoral administration.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Avilés.

20 We will now hear testimony from the
21 administration. We will hear from Commissioner
22 Castro, Lorena Lucero, Rebecca Engel, Enrique Chavira
23 Cantu, Molly Schaeffer, and Kelly Yzique-Zea.

24 Before we begin, I will administer the
25 affirmation. Panelists, please raise your right hand.

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2 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,
3 and nothing but the truth before this committee, and
4 to respond honestly to council member questions?

5 (PANEL AFFIRMS)

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

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you, Chair Avilés, and
9 members of the Committee on Immigration, for the
10 opportunity to testify today. Thank you, Public
11 Advocate Jumaane Williams, for joining us today.

12 My name is Manuel Castro, I am the Commissioner
13 of The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs or MOIA.

14 I am here today with Molly Schaeffer, Executive
15 Director of the Office of Asylum Seeker Operations or
16 OASO; Kelly Yzique-Zea, Director of Immigration
17 Policy for the Office of Asylum Seeker Operations;
18 and my Colleagues at MOIA Enrique Chavira Cantu,
19 Senior Policy Adviser for Federal Immigration; Lorena
20 Lucero, Chief Policy Advisor; and Rebecca Engel,
21 Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs and
22 Research.

23 As you may know, the work that I do at MOIA is
24 incredibly personal and important to me. I came to
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2 this country as a child, crossed the border with my
3 mother, and grew up as a Dreamer in New York City.

4 I know firsthand the anxieties and the fears and
5 the challenges that many of our fellow immigrant New
6 Yorkers may be experiencing in this moment.

7 I clearly remember the uncertainty that my family
8 and I lived every day, not knowing if one day I would
9 be separated from my family and never see them again.

10 These experiences shaped me, forming my lifelong
11 commitment to advocating for immigrant communities.
12 And while in my role as commissioner, it is different
13 from the days as a community organizer, my dedication
14 to advocating for and empowering immigrants have
15 never been stronger, and it remains the core of who I
16 am.

17 So the to of the community organizers and to the
18 directly impacted individuals who are here today, I
19 want to say thank you. Our team and myself will be
20 listening to your testimony and to your feedback
21 today, and will stand ready to work with you to
22 respond to my to whatever might come next.

23 So to speak a little bit about the work that we
24 have been engaged in in city government, and to
25 summarize for the purposes of time since the summer

1 of last year, we have engaged, along with our
2 colleagues across city government, in transition
3 planning in response to the potential changes in the
4 federal administration. During this time, in
5 particular, the last two months, we have
6 accomplished, I think, significant and important work
7 in preparing for what may come next, including
8 sending written guidance to all of our agencies about
9 the importance of following our sanctuary laws.
10

11 Guided by our Charter Mandate, MOIA continues to
12 lead efforts in support of immigrant communities
13 through community rooted and innovative programs as
14 well as to promote our commitment to immigrant New
15 Yorkers regardless of immigration status and the
16 importance that they may access city services without
17 fear.

18 Internally, MOIA has been working in partnership
19 with the City's Law Department to ensure that staff
20 are thoroughly trained and fully understand the scope
21 and meaning of New York City's local laws, including
22 our sanctuary laws and executive orders.

23 City agencies and offices, including contractors
24 and vendors, are generally prohibited from assisting
25 immigration enforcement or utilizing city resources

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2 for such purposes. Furthermore, agencies are required
3 to document any inquiries from federal immigration
4 authorities related to immigration enforcement.

5 It is crucial to note that city services are
6 available to all New Yorkers regardless of
7 immigration status. City government simply does not
8 discriminate based on a person's immigration status.

9 In addition, we are increasing and sustaining
10 important lines of communication and collaborations
11 across our internal city agencies and offices.

12 The interagency immigrant task force mandated by
13 the City Charter to meet quarterly, and led by MOIA,
14 is meeting more often to coordinate and ensure
15 ongoing communication across our city as we address
16 issues impacting immigrant New Yorkers.

17 Externally, MOIA is working closely with
18 nonprofits and faith based organizations to inform
19 immigrant communities of their rights and about the
20 availability of important city services.

21 We are launching the MOIA Immigrant Rights
22 Collaborative, which builds upon and expands our
23 Immigrant Rights Workshops Program and will deliver
24 immigrant rights presentations to immigrant New
25 Yorkers in shelters, faith based organizations,

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2 houses of worship, schools, and other community
3 spaces used by immigrant communities.

4 The presentations will include important
5 information about our Sanctuary City laws, the rights
6 and protections for immigrant New Yorkers under the
7 New York City Human Rights Law, and how individuals
8 can report violations of such laws and their rights.

9 The presentations will serve as additional entry
10 points for community organizations and their clients
11 to connect to free and quality immigration legal
12 services.

13 Most importantly, the Collaborative will work
14 together to update presentations and materials as new
15 updates emerge and work together to best serve and
16 inform immigrant communities.

17 With these trainings, collaboration, and
18 information sharing, both within and outside of city
19 government, MOIA will play a critical role in
20 coordinating outreach to our immigrant communities.

21 While we cannot control or improperly impede the
22 actions of federal government, we can and will
23 continue to do everything we can to educate and
24 inform our residents about their rights under local
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2 and federal law and about the services available to
3 them.

4 At the same time, MOIA is launching a
5 communications campaign, so our communities are well
6 informed of their legal rights. This is intended to
7 counteract misinformation while empowering immigrant
8 communities with accurate information about their
9 rights and protections.

10 This campaign will uplift our updated public
11 materials, available in multiple languages, that
12 address the most pressing concerns of immigrant New
13 Yorkers.

14 We created materials and responded to the
15 community's most, sorry... most asked questions,
16 including Know Your Rights and immigration
17 enforcement, Sanctuary City laws, and what to do if a
18 friend or family member is detained.

19 The materials are available in print and on our
20 website in the top 10 languages and more languages to
21 come.

22 We're also working closely with our colleagues at
23 311 and other city agencies to ensure they have these
24 updated materials that they can use in their own
25 outreach work.

1
2 With these efforts both within an outside
3 sorry... In terms of legal services, we are also glad
4 to report back to be on track to launching MOIA's
5 Immigration Legal Centers... Legal Support Centers
6 Initiative this summer.

7 This is a more than \$18 million investment, over
8 three years, to set up 25 community centers at
9 organizations providing culturally and linguistically
10 responsive immigration legal services.

11 This initiative will provide community members
12 with a variety of legal and nonlegal navigation and
13 support services, and maintain close outreach and
14 referral partnerships with local institutions, as
15 well as to provide referrals to city government
16 resources and programs.

17 So while we have made much progress during this
18 time, we recognize that there is still much to do.
19 MOIA stands ready to partner with City Council,
20 advocates, community organizations, and others to
21 deepen collaborations and amplify our collective
22 impact.

23 And as I shared as the at the outset, this work
24 is incredibly important and personal to me. I know
25 what it feels like to live in fear and uncertainty,

1
2 and I know the strength it takes not to let fear win.
3 That experience is shared by so many of my fellow New
4 Yorkers and colleagues. Many of us have family
5 members who still live in fear and friends and
6 colleagues that have to navigate the uncertainties of
7 our broken immigration system. These realities give
8 us the strength to continue to do everything we can
9 to support our immigrant communities no matter the
10 challenges ahead.

11 Thank you, and I look forward to answering your
12 questions.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Commissioner.

14 So I'm gonna start with just a few questions, and
15 then I want to ask my colleagues to jump in and then
16 we'll resume. Obviously, we are short on time, and I
17 ask that you... thank you for summarizing your
18 testimony, by the way. Acknowledged, and appreciated.
19 Keep our answers tight, and answer the question to
20 the best of your ability.

21 So does MOIA have a dedicated staff who advise on
22 the city's sanctuary and detainer laws?

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: To advise the administration
24 or the general public?

25 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Both.

1
2 Maybe I should go back to if you want to talk
3 about MOIA's role in advising the mayor and city
4 agencies, which you mentioned briefly, if there's
5 anything beyond that.

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. I, uh, I and MOIA's
7 staff play an important advisory role to our deputy
8 mayors and the mayor.

9 In in recent months, I have provided extensive,
10 information and advice on our - not just our
11 sanctuary laws but other important subjects
12 significant to the immigrant community.

13 I am very proud to say that our office does play
14 an important role. I'm here with Lorena Lucero, our
15 Chief Policy Advisor who takes a lead on policy
16 matters.

17 But I do want to say that I am thankful for the
18 mayor and the deputy mayors who take, uhm, much of my
19 advice, listen to my experience as an immigrant and
20 as an advocate, and for them to take up some of the
21 proposals that I have put forward - including
22 circulating written guidance to all of our city
23 agencies and offices with respect to our sanctuary
24 policies and the importance of adhering to them, and
25 also to mandate training to our city staff and, most

1
2 importantly, our community facing colleagues, and to
3 be ready for whatever might come next, as well as,
4 allow me to bring together cities from across the
5 country in other sectors to make sure that we have
6 the infrastructure in place to best, support our
7 immigrant communities.

8 So, yes, we do play an important role. I'll let,
9 Lorena say more about this. And...

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: If we could just... I am
11 going to pause you for a quick second so we can move
12 through.

13 So does how... does MOIA have dedicated staff who
14 advise specifically on sanctuary and detainer laws?

15 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yes, and she's about
16 to speak. Rebecca Engel?

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Oh, okay...

18 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: She's a point person
19 at MOIA.

20 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Hi, how are you? So, yes, my name
21 is Rebecca Engel, I am The Director Of Policy and
22 Legislative Affairs at MOIA. And that is my primary
23 job is actually to advise both the City and
24 particular agencies about all of our sanctuary laws.

1
2 This advisement takes place in a number of
3 different manners. This... the commissioner mentioned
4 that we send out memos to remind all of the heads of
5 agencies of our sanctuary laws. We have sponsored a
6 number of trainings, especially in re in recent
7 months, of general counsel and other important staff
8 about our Sanctuary City policies. And in fact, when
9 it comes to enforcement, we go above and beyond what
10 we need to do under some of these laws.

11 Just as one quick example, I will give you under
12 Local Law 228, our primary sanctuary law, we are only
13 really supposed to be reporting on what agencies
14 report to us - How many requests have they received
15 from local law... from federal law enforcement and
16 whether they have responded.

17 And we do more than that. We actually have... we
18 reach out to agencies. We talk to them about the
19 incidents that have occurred, and we have helped many
20 agencies write their own policies on Local Law 228.

21 So that is what we do on Sanctuary City laws.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So... So, Ms. Engel, are you
23 the only person that engages in this work?

24 DIRECTOR ENGEL: No, I'm not the only person, I'm
25 the primary person, yes...

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Primary person? So how many
3 staff do you have dedicated to doing this work?

4 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So the entire Policy team at MOIA
5 that is dedicated to doing this work, and I think
6 that's what? Five people right now? Yeah, something
7 like that. Five people.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Five staff? Thank you.

9 So can you tell us, does MOIA have regular
10 meetings with the NYPD, the Department of
11 Corrections, and the Department of Probation on
12 detainer requests?

13 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So we have had meetings with all
14 three of those agencies, and we have advised them on
15 their policies on local... on specifically on Local
16 Law 228. We helped write the NYPD's policy. We also
17 gave advisement to DOC several years ago - before, I
18 was at MOIA - but I think it was of a similar
19 variety. And then DOP is among the agencies that we
20 have sent emails to reminding them of their
21 obligations under Local Law 228.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So how many times in the last
23 year has MOIA met with, have had hard touches with
24 each of those three agencies?
25

1
2 DIRECTOR ENGEL: I would say it has been the most
3 probably with the NYPD because we significantly
4 changed their policy with the... under their request.
5 But then I would say... so several times with NYPD,
6 and then in terms of DOC, mostly in the form of phone
7 calls and trainings. And with DOP, not as much
8 because DOP receives very few requests from federal
9 immigration enforcement. And we don't have an exact
10 number, but we can come back.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay.

12 In terms of, uh, in terms of the policies that
13 you are help... you're helping to develop at each of
14 these agencies, how much element within that policy
15 deals with accountability for following those
16 particular policies?

17 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So we do make clear that, you
18 know, and this is what we sent out a memo to all of,
19 uh, all of the agencies making clear their
20 obligations under our Sanctuary City laws.

21 But when we help write the policies for agencies
22 such as NYPD, yes, we do ask them to include within
23 there that you must report to us, you can... you must
24 be honest in your reporting, and you must report to
25

1
2 us on a quarterly basis every interaction that you
3 have had with federal immigration enforcement.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And do you have periodic
5 touches throughout the year around that report?

6 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So that report is... We...
7 actually, it's on a fiscal quarterly basis that every
8 agency in the entire city has to report to us any
9 request from assistance from federal immigration
10 enforcement.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And how does the Agency
12 ascertain whether that report is accurate?

13 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So we actually do get calls from
14 agencies saying, "Do you think this counts as a
15 request for assistance from federal immigration
16 enforcement?" I talk it through with them and then,
17 you know, consulting with the other individuals on
18 the staff, we decide whether it does count or not and
19 then we put it in the report.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay, I think I will circle
21 back...

22 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: certainly, to this line of
24 questioning.

1
2 Does MOIA have a point of contact for immigration
3 attorneys and public defenders seeking to prevent the
4 transfer of their clients into federal immigration
5 custody?

6 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I am going to say
7 that, uh, no, not at... not at this moment.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Does MOIA think that this
9 would be good practice?

10 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yes, absolutely.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay.

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I do want to clarify
13 that we often receive requests through our
14 Constituency Services Hotline...

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Commissioner, can I ask you
16 to speak louder and into the mic?

17 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I said we... Sorry...

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We do often get requests
20 from attorneys in the community as a whole and
21 members of our Legal Services Team do field many
22 requests for assistance whether it's letters of
23 support and so forth.

24

25

1
2 So in practice, we do have a robust Constituent
3 Services Team who engages on a day to day with these
4 requests.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, so let's walk through the
6 robust - whether it is in fact robust. Tell us what
7 currently happens when people call either 311 or are
8 asking for legal assistance.

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So as you know, much of our
10 work at MOIA happens through our contracted nonprofit
11 providers.

12 If someone does call 311, they will be referred
13 to one of our contracted nonprofit providers or to
14 the General MOIA hotline or to the MOIA Immigration
15 and Legal Services hotline, where they will be,
16 assisted with their particular questions and
17 requests.

18 We have an External Affairs team that both does
19 the direct outreach, and also the Constituent
20 Services work that also, uh, is there to respond to
21 any questions that may arise.

22 Again, you know, as I shared in my testimony, we
23 are in the process of establishing immigration legal
24 support centers in immigrant communities, so people
25 have access to these services directly where they

1
2 live. The existing legal services program has a
3 hotline that people will receive information and
4 referrals to providers and there they will receive
5 the assistance that they may be looking for.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: What kind of... kind of
7 assistance? It sounds like it's mostly referrals. Is
8 there actually any, like, substantive assistance that
9 is offered to people?

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. We provide significant
11 immigration legal service assistance, and we do this
12 through our contracted nonprofit providers. So we
13 outsource this work to a variety... (CROSS-TALK)

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So you're referring? It's
15 primarily a referral? It is... you're not providing
16 the legal... not taking the case at MOIA and
17 providing the direct...

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No, we...

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: legal services? It is purely
20 referral based to the providers that you contract
21 with?

22 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. We do have a number of
23 different legal services programs throughout the
24 city. Those that we manage, we do not do in house. We

1
2 outsource and contract out to our legal service
3 providers.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. And so the... both
5 hotlines are primarily referral is what you're doing?
6 When people call with an issue, you're referring them
7 to the agencies that you contract with?

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. I mean, it's
9 important...

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: to sort of help people
12 navigate and clarify their questions, and then we
13 refer them to the appropriate agency or partner.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. In terms of... I think
15 we'll definitely circle back on this.

16 In terms of Local Law 186 of 2017, MOIA is
17 supposed to regularly convene with the interagency
18 task force, which you noted.

19 Can you describe how many times the task force
20 has met since mayor Adams took office?

21 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. And I... and I would
22 add, uhm, this is something that Rebecca also takes a
23 lead. Rebecca has quite wide experience working on
24 these issues, including issues on, uh, to do with our
25

1
2 sanctuary policies, both in the nonprofit and
3 government space.

4 So I'll let Rebecca talk a little bit more about
5 this, but just to uplift the work of the Policy Team
6 further - You know, many of them come from the
7 nonprofit and advocacy world as well. So they can
8 weigh in on how we engage with our interagency task
9 force to do this work.

10 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: And I'll jump in
11 first, Rebecca. We don't have the full number of
12 these last three years, but we have the numbers since
13 March of 2024, which is when Rebecca started our
14 office.

15 Since March 2024, we've met one, two, three, six
16 times, and we are now, meeting monthly. And that's
17 sort of a habit that we got into at the end of the
18 last year given some of the changes that we're
19 predicting were forthcoming. But, Rebecca...

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And are all the task force
21 members participating?

22 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: So, they attend, uh,
23 if... and there is a list of agencies that are
24 required to attend, and they join our meetings...

25 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And they're attending?

1 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Uhm...

3 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: By mandate, we... we are
4 supposed to meet quarterly, and there is a list of
5 mandated agencies.
6

7 However, we've opened it up to all agencies to
8 appoint a liaison to attend these meetings. And
9 between these interagency wide task force meetings,
10 there is constant collaboration and discussions.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Are the representations from
12 the city agencies decision making senior level
13 members?

14 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Can you repeat that?

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Are the member... the
16 required agencies that are participating in the task
17 force, are they senior level decision makers of the
18 agencies?

19 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I don't have their
20 titles at the ready, but I don't know, Rebecca, if
21 you have... But I'll add, and as you answer, Rebecca,
22 that we also did a targeted effort to bring in folks
23 who focus on immigrant issues. We thought that was
24 important too.
25

1
2 But, Rebecca, if you want to chime in in regards
3 to decision makers who also joined the call... the
4 meetings.

5 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Certainly. And, thank you, Chair.

6 And again, it's a mix. We have a lot of attendees
7 at this task force, and I would say it is a mix of
8 both senior level, mid level, and lower level,
9 because we try to... want to try to bring in as many
10 city employees as possible to... together to
11 coordinate, to try to think about a response to, you
12 know, the upcoming administration in particular.
13 That's the number one issue we've been dealing with.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And in terms of... what
15 recommendations have come out of this task force and
16 have any been implemented?

17 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So the recommendations have been,
18 you know, I'd have to... I'd have to actually go back
19 and look at our synopsis of each of each task force
20 to know. But I know that the recommendations have
21 generally been to communicate more effectively and to
22 actually try to collaborate on projects more
23 efficiently.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I guess I'd like to hear more
25 specifically because that is incredibly broad.

1
2 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: Yeah. So
3 closer to, uh, when we started meeting more
4 regularly, one of the bigger issues was responding to
5 the results of the federal election.

6 We did discuss different things we were hearing
7 and concerns that each agency had that informed other
8 work that we were doing with City Hall.

9 Out of that, we have since collaborated with the
10 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the
11 Department of Health, and Department of Social
12 Services to put out a resource on public charge.

13 And we've also consulted them for additional
14 resources of front facing community resources on
15 knowing your rights with ICE, what to do if somebody
16 is detained, and the New York and New York City
17 sanctuary laws.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, specifics are
19 super important.

20 I am going to take a quick pause here and turn it
21 over to Public Advocate Williams for... No? Okay.

22 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you very much,
23 Madam Chair.

24 Thank you, again, Commissioner. Just, first,
25 thank you for the work that you are doing. Your

1
2 staff, I know this has been difficult. I also wanted
3 to just give a shoutout to Deputy Mayor Anne
4 Williams-Isom, who has had a difficult job, and is
5 doing the best she can as well.

6 I do have some questions, uh, specifically, uh,
7 about the mayor. So, I know that puts you in a
8 difficult situation, but I am concerned about what
9 you talked about, the misinformation, and I think a
10 lot of it is coming from him.

11 But before I ask about that, I do want to ask I
12 know, MOIA is partnered with organizations to provide
13 and organize immigrant rights workshops. Will the
14 Office be expanding and doubling down on those, and
15 will the Agency be able to train other city agencies
16 in that regard?

17 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Our Know Your Rights
18 Workshops? Yes, I don't know if I skipped this over
19 in my testimony, because I shortened my remarks, but
20 we are expanding the work that we do with our Know
21 Your Rights Workshops program, I think in significant
22 ways. And we're exploring other ways to amplify and
23 grow that work.

24 But, yes, I think this is some of the most
25 critical work that we are engaged in, uh, to make

1
2 sure that people are empowered with appropriate
3 information about their rights and what to do in the
4 event that they are confronted with federal
5 immigration authorities.

6 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: So I just want to know
7 if the how much RFP is going to... if at all, and are
8 we training other agencies?

9 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I see you're
10 watching the time, Public Advocate. I'm gonna try to
11 be quick, uhm, run through this. But, uhm, we
12 expanded our current program that we have, which is
13 called the Immigrant Rights Workshop through those
14 providers, which were 17. Uhm, we expanded it to
15 create the Immigrant Rights Collaborative. It's 12
16 providers who are gonna be providing trainings From
17 January until June 30th, there's gonna be 240
18 additional presentations that are gonna be given.

19 The biggest difference here is that we are
20 indicating where these trainings will happen and
21 prioritizing shelters, faith based institutions,
22 schools, and libraries.

23 And that's some of the work that that we're doing
24 with the Immigrant Rights Collaborative.

1
2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Okay, I also want
3 (INAUDIBLE) in case I run out of time, the one space
4 that I would push a lot on is particularly Black
5 immigrants, uh, from Afriancan countries, from Haiti,
6 that language access is really bad. And there are
7 groups that you can partner with to assist.

8 But now... and just in terms of misinformation, I
9 just want to understand, is MOIA, and you,
10 Commissioner, the ones that brief the mayor directly
11 on how Sanctuary City works, what our protections
12 actually are? Is that is... that MOIA that's doing
13 that?

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, we partner and work
15 closely with the City's Law Department, and I would
16 say that they are the main entity that briefs and
17 informs the mayor on all our local laws, including
18 sanctuary laws.

19 I certainly do speak with the mayor and deputy
20 mayors about sanctuary laws and...

21 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Because he seems
22 woefully ignorant of what they actually are. And so I
23 am concerned where is he getting his information, or
24 at least are we pushing back?

1
2 So, asylum seekers and the folks who are here,
3 many of them have, one, are here illegally. They do
4 have constitutional protections. He's not the only
5 one that has constitutional protections.

6 And we also already, as I mentioned, coordinate
7 with ICE in about a 150 violent crimes and felonies.

8 So is the mayor aware of that?

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. The Administration
10 clarified that, you know, undocumented individuals
11 do, in fact, have constitutional rights.

12 And, yes, our sanctuary laws in place, uh, do
13 allow coordination without ICE through what is known
14 as our... the Criminal Carveout.

15 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: And so was he aware of
16 that before he made the statements, or did we correct
17 it after he made the statements?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I can't speak to what he was
19 aware of or not, but we do have constant
20 conversations about these issues.

21 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: And is he aware that
22 that information is not only divisive, but can cause
23 harm to New Yorkers who are here?

24 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Again, I really can't speak
25 to what he's aware or not, but we do have, you know,

1
2 these conversations internally, and we look to
3 clarify anything that might confuse people.

4 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: In terms of the \$6
5 billion that you may not be able to, uhm, answer
6 this, but the, again, a part of the divisiveness is
7 pretending that somehow if the migrants weren't here,
8 the \$6 billion would have been spent on long term to
9 New Yorkers. And I know that to be true because they
10 didn't do it before, and we have always had that
11 money.

12 So is that any kind of dialogue that you have had
13 trying to get the mayor not to mention these
14 divisive, frankly, lies and/or misinformation that
15 will harm people - and to not make gestures that he
16 is going to support what Donald Trump is trying to
17 put in place, uh, in terms of preparing a mass
18 deportation apparatus for... in New York City?

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, (TIMER CHIMES) you know,
20 with respect to the... what we've spent so far in
21 responding to newly arrived immigrants, you know, a
22 lot of our advocacy has been focused on making sure
23 that we are getting the appropriate support from the
24 federal government, and a lot of advocacy has gone
25 into that.

1
2 And part of the reason we continue to uplift that
3 is so that, uhm, I think everyone's aware that, you
4 know, that we have received very limited support from
5 the federal government with that respect.

6 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: All right, thank you.
7 And I agree, so I want to make sure - two things can
8 be true at the time, I think we were failed a lot by
9 Washington, to be honest, and also by Albany. I think
10 the governor could've done more.

11 Those things didn't happen, and, also, we did not
12 have to spread misinformation.

13 There were things that we could've done here as
14 well, like connect them with, uhm, make sure they
15 have their legal applications in at a more timely
16 manner.

17 So there's a lot of things that went wrong and
18 could've gone better. That doesn't mean we have to
19 spread misinformation and use the, uh, righteous
20 anger - because new long term New Yorkers have a
21 right to be angry about what they did not get. I am
22 angry.

23 But steering that anger away from leaders who
24 made that decision, uh, to people who had nothing to
25 do with it, is very, very dangerous.

1
2 And my message is hopefully that the mayor will
3 stop. As a mayor, you have to meet with whomever is
4 president. I get that. But you also have a duty to
5 protect all New Yorkers who are here.

6 Multiple things can be true at the same time.

7 People are very worried about what's to come up
8 in a in a couple of days.

9 End with what I've been saying, and I have to
10 give Comptroller Lander his credit, he's the one who
11 put me on to the saying that they're doing in Brazil,
12 which is, "No one let go of anyone's hand." And I'm
13 really hoping we can hold on to that to get through,
14 uh, what might be coming in the future.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Public Advocate.
17 Council Member Nurse?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair Avilés,
19 and good morning, still.

20 Just a couple questions. During the last Trump
21 administration, the Mayor's Office and the City
22 Council made sure to remove the ICE Office from
23 Rikers' jails and ensure that the NYPD not honor ICE
24 detainers with the exception of 177 serious crimes.

1
2 Since then, the NYPD Handbook was changed so that
3 if there is cooperation with ICE, it would require an
4 approval from a senior officer.

5 Is your advice or is it your understanding that
6 the Administration and the NYPD will uphold these
7 sanctuary protections during the incoming
8 administration?

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: As, you know, we've stated,
10 our sanctuary laws that are in place, can only be
11 modified by City Council, and the directive, by the
12 mayor and the Administration is that we must follow
13 the laws in in place, including our sanctuary laws.

14 With respect to NYPD's Handbook, I'll let Rebecca
15 talk a little bit more about her work with NYPD and
16 advising in that matter.

17 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: And I'll just add
18 and, please, Rebecca, expand on the work that we did
19 to work to update the handbook. But we really can't
20 sort of get into specifics in regards to the NYPD,
21 sort of, like, processes that they do. But I want to
22 let Rebecca expand on what we did do to sort of
23 improve or try to help improve the handbook.

24 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So, yes, we did work with NYPD
25 over a series of months this past summer about

1
2 updating their handbook. I do remember that footnote
3 that you are referring to, and that is accurate, uhm,
4 that they, in those situations should consult with
5 general counsel.

6 Whether that is going to change in the upcoming
7 administration, I cannot speculate. I can only say
8 that NYPD has been very vigilant, uh, so far actually
9 in their reporting and in their, uh, in the writing
10 of their policies and has not broken any detainer
11 laws in my tenure at all.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay.

13 And just for the record, would you remind us all
14 what those specific types of instances would be where
15 they would require, or they would get approval from a
16 supervising officer?

17 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yeah.

18 That's where we can't answer it because we're not
19 in the NYPD. I and... I don't imagine we walk through
20 any type... we wouldn't be able to answer that. We
21 would have to defer to the NYPD.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, I... I mean, it seems
23 like this is something that the entire
24 Administration, at least in this office, should be
25 prepared to answer coming in so that we have that,

1
2 and that you're able to effectively communicate that
3 across the board to different agencies.

4 Another question we have is, does the
5 Administration believe that the NYPD can make arrests
6 solely for civil immigration enforcement purposes
7 without a judicial warrant?

8 DIRECTOR ENGEL: The NYPD can make an arrest for
9 an immigration, uh, a violation?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: For a civil immigration
11 enforcement purpose?

12 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Absolutely not...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Without a judicial
14 warrant... (CROSS-TALK)

15 DIRECTOR ENGEL: no... (CROSS-TALK)

16 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: (INAUDIBLE)
17 a judicial... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, thank you.

19 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Yeah...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: And then, lastly, has MOIA
21 taken into consideration, uhm, looking at particular
22 these street vendors and how those populations might
23 be impacted by the change in federal administration?

24

25

1
2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes, I don't know, Rebecca,
3 did you... I don't know if you... Did you have a
4 chance to answer that?

5 We, uhm, just to clarify, NYPD does not enforce
6 civil immigration laws.

7 With respect to street vendors and others, uhm,
8 certainly, we are worried, uh, about, you know, the
9 impact on their lives with what has been outlined.

10 You know, we are following very closely proposals
11 and commentary on immigration enforcement, and we
12 took take those very seriously.

13 As I said, there's still a lot to be determined,
14 and we'll learn more in the coming weeks about how
15 that will be operationalized.

16 And we are in particularly, uhm, thinking through
17 the most vulnerable populations, including street
18 vendors and others who may be particularly exposed.

19 Enrique, did you want to add to that?

20 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: Yeah. I
21 would just add that we did have, uhm, that earlier,
22 uh, last year, we did begin touch points specifically
23 related to vendors in the subways, and it is an
24 ongoing conversation that we have with the Deputy
25

1
2 Mayor's team, the Deputy Mayor of Health and Human
3 Services.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: (TIMER CHIMES) Okay. Do you
5 have any... have you provided any recommendations or
6 guidance to them yet?

7 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: Oh, it is an
8 ongoing conversation.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. Thank you, Chair, I
10 will turn it back over.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Council Member
12 Nurse.

13 In terms of, uh, has the Department of
14 Corrections reached out to MOIA for guidance and
15 interpretation on the detainer laws? I know we... you
16 mentioned definitely touch points. Have you had...
17 specifically had conversations and offered guidance
18 to DOC?

19 DIRECTOR ENGEL: (NO MIC) (INAUDIBLE)... Sorry, no
20 I have not. (INAUDIBLE)

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So we understand that, uhm,
22 Department of Corrections has their own
23 interpretation of the law. What has MOIA done to
24 ensure that they are not following an interpretation
25 that does not actually uphold the law?

1
2 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So DOC actually reports to us on
3 a monthly basis everything that is required under
4 Local Law 228. And so it is an extensive report that
5 talks about, you know, how many detainers and who
6 was... who was actually held and for what reason.

7 And I follow that report very closely and then,
8 of course, report on it. And they have not, in my...
9 in my time here, ever violated any of our detainer
10 laws and or our Sanctuary City laws.

11 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: And I'll add, Chair,
12 that I know we have been mentioning this a lot, but
13 in regards to trainings, we are scheduling meetings
14 with the DOC, DOP, and the NYPD in regard to some of
15 the guidance that was put out, uh, connected to our
16 sanctuary laws.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Can you, for the record,
18 summarize what that guidance is?

19 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Well, I can't go
20 into details on the substance, but I can... because
21 it is privileged. But I will, just generally walk you
22 through some of the issues that we are discussing.

23 And I know that you mentioned guidance, and I'm
24 interpreting this as training, so I'm just gonna take
25 it... tell you there.

1
2 There are three broad issues that we, touch base,
3 and are all related to local laws.

4 So protecting the confident protection of
5 confidential information, access to city property,
6 and the limited cooperation, that we have with
7 immigration enforcement.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So in February 2023, this
9 committee held an oversight hearing examining city
10 detainer laws. MOIA had testified, before this
11 council, at the hearing that during which the results
12 of a FOIL (Freedom of Information Law) filed by the
13 Immigration Defense Project and the Black Alliance
14 for Just Immigration were shared out showing without
15 a doubt that the Department of Correction has been
16 violating the City's detainer laws and actively
17 taking steps to facilitate detention by ICE.

18 The FOIL results also demonstrated a culture of
19 collusion with ICE, uhm, an email signed by DOC with
20 the hashtag "#sendthemallback".

21 We know these practices continue from speaking
22 with advocates on the ground. What steps is MOIA
23 taking more specifically and more affirmatively with
24 this administration to investigate the ongoing
25 practices at DOC that flout our laws?

1
2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I'll start.

3 At the time, I may have said that, yes, that, in
4 fact, uh, it was very concerning to me and that I
5 didn't want to weigh in on any, uh, on this matter to
6 not get in the way of any legal issues that may be
7 occurring.

8 And so, but just to say that, this is why it was
9 important for us to send written guidance about the
10 importance of our sanctuary laws to all of our city
11 agencies and offices to, uh, underscore the
12 importance of adhering to our local laws and to reach
13 out to MOIA and the Law Department for additional
14 guidance and questions that people might have.

15 You may have also read about our training to
16 general counsel across city agencies and offices, uh,
17 where, again, we discuss the importance of our
18 sanctuary laws.

19 And the expectation is for every agency and
20 office to tailor their training and to align closely
21 with the laws in place for their staff.

22 And this will be important for the coming federal
23 administration.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So it's our understanding
25 that MOIA has never taken a meeting with advocates

1
2 who shared these FOIL results, uhm, and have asked
3 for meetings to discuss. Is this accurate?

4 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I do... I can't
5 answer because I just don't remember. But I'll...
6 I'm... we're happy to meet with them. I mean, I'm
7 happy to meet with anybody. So if you tell me after
8 the hearing, I'm happy to do the outreach myself.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: We would... this should be
10 alarming enough to both remember and prioritize,
11 because it is not the only stories that we've heard
12 of collusion. And here you have direct proof of a
13 culture of collusion with no accountability.

14 So I would absolutely 100 percent urge an
15 immediate meeting with those, uhm, with those
16 particular advocates, and also commit to a more
17 intensive engagement around a culture of collusion
18 that has figured out how to evade the laws.

19 In particular, how will MOIA put forward
20 accountability for flouting these laws? And what has
21 been the direct message to, in particular, the
22 Department of Corrections and NYPD, and we'll put
23 into Department of Probation around following these
24 laws?

25 (NO RESPONSE)

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: No specific accountability
3 directives.

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I would just say that our
5 Charter mandates are very specific and very limited.
6 We often go above and beyond what is mandated of us.
7 But, of course, again, our ability to, uh, to do this
8 work is, again, limited to those charges...

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Have you advised the mayor
10 and the first deputy mayors that there needs to be
11 strong accountability measures for any city agency
12 breaking the law?

13 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, again, part of our
14 advice for the last... (CROSS-TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I think it's a yes...

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I...

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I think it's a yes or no
18 question. Have you advised the mayor and the first
19 deputy mayors around the need for very specific
20 accountability measures in the policies of each of
21 these agencies?

22 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes, as I... As I described,
23 you know, part of the work that we are doing now is
24 making sure that our staff, our colleagues understand
25 the importance of following our local laws.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I don't think you answered
3 the question, Commissioner, but I'm gonna pause for a
4 second and hand it over to Council Member Hanif.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, and good
6 morning.

7 Is MOIA positioned that Local Law 228 does not
8 require all city agencies to have written policies
9 and protocols about implementing the law?

10 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So we actually have now started,
11 uh, in our trainings, especially of general counsel,
12 we have said, you absolutely must have a policy. If
13 you do not have a policy, and many agencies probably
14 do not, those that do not interact with ICE on a
15 normal basis, even they should have a policy, we have
16 said.

17 And so I have had numerous meetings in the last
18 month or two in which I have gone over policies that
19 have come... did come... that they have... (CROSS-
20 TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And you're reviewing...

22 DIRECTOR ENGEL: And I'm reviewing... (CROSS-TALK)

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: You're... You provide
24 guidance... (CROSS-TALK)

1
2 DIRECTOR ENGEL: (INAUDIBLE) and making sure they
3 are accurate and that they are correct.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And are City employees
5 trained on their obligation to not use resources for
6 immigration enforcement? Is there a single citywide
7 training, or is it done at the agency or department
8 level?

9 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I can start that.

10 A series of trainings have been rolled out. We,
11 uh, with close coordination with the Law Department
12 and their support, have trained general counsels from
13 across the city.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So not yet City employees?

15 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: However, in that
16 meeting, in addition to that, we were all... we're
17 also targeting a subset of agencies that we know have
18 a high probability of interacting with immigrant New
19 Yorkers. That subset will be training their
20 staff... (CROSS-TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: You said subset? Which are
22 those agencies?

23 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Happy to... to give
24 you some of the agencies - it is going to include the
25 Department of Aging, OASO, ACS, the Department of

1
2 Social Services, Department of Health and Mental
3 Hygiene, Department of Homeless Services, HPD, The
4 Mayor's Office Housing Recovery Operation, Human
5 Resources Administration, Emergency Management,
6 Department of Youth and Community Development, and
7 Health + Hospitals.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you for that.

9 And so you're saying that a subset of agencies
10 will receive training, but does that include all of
11 the employees in these agencies?

12 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: It's gonna include
13 employees who are particularly our frontline
14 employees who interact with immigrant, communities,
15 frontline... (CROSS-TALK)

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And why are you leaving out
17 the others?

18 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Well, it's a lot...
19 there's lots of agencies, and we're sort of triaging
20 to prioritize those that we know, uh, high volume
21 touch points with immigrant New Yorkers.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And when is that... when's
23 the most recent set of trainings going to take place?

24 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Oh, we've been a
25 busy office. I think the last one... (CROSS-TALK)

1 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: When was the most recent...

2 (CROSS-TALK)

3 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: was on Monday?
4 Tuesday?

5 UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE) Tuesday (INAUDIBLE)

6 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I don't even know
7 what day I'm in...

8 UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

9 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yeah, (INAUDIBLE)
10 Tuesday... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yes, well, it's Thursday.

12 Okay. So and you're... you said that they're
13 happening at a frequency that is, like, pretty
14 regular?

15 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yeah. We're building
16 that out. But we're hoping to sort of do some of the
17 again, just to go back a bit, Council Member, we did
18 target general counsels primarily.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So the general counsel
20 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

21 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Have already been
22 trained.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay. So then what happened
24 on Tuesday?
25

1
2 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: So on Tuesday, we
3 targeted a subset. Those are the 12 that I outlined
4 to you. This is sort of an additional training that
5 was being provided to these specific agencies that I
6 that I outlined for you as well.

7 And we're working with agencies to sort of build
8 the next steps as they sort of train their own staff
9 as well.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Understood.

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Can I just add and emphasize
12 that all of our city staff have an expectation to
13 understand and follow local laws, including sanctuary
14 laws with respect to interacting with our immigrant
15 communities, and understand issues such as data
16 collection and privacy matters and so forth. So the
17 training should be a refresher.

18 You know, we mentioned that we train general
19 counsel. General counsel are responsible for ensuring
20 that their internal policies and procedures aligned
21 with local laws. So that's why it's important for us
22 to have taken that step.

23 We've also trained the members of the Interagency
24 Task Force, which, again, they're liaisons from all
25 city agencies and offices. They are the subject

1
2 matter experts on immigration and how those... that
3 relates to their agencies.

4 Now the general counsel and others within those
5 agencies are supposed to tailor training to others
6 within the agencies. Again, we're talking about tens
7 of thousands of people.

8 And, this is all to say that this work has been
9 important for us to start with, but our work is
10 ongoing. And we are partnering with the (TIMER
11 CHIMES) City's Law Department to make sure that not
12 only are we providing training, but also ongoing
13 assistance to whoever needs additional answers.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I'll be quick, Chair.

15 And so then when was the most recent agency
16 departmental guidance issued?

17 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So the Law Department recently
18 sent out several documents. The... to these
19 specialized agencies, the ones that that Lorena
20 mentioned before. And these documents included a one
21 pager that said that... is going to go to frontward
22 facing staff that says, "Here's what to do when
23 confronted with an ICE officer." It included
24 specialized legal guidance for general counsel and
25 then it also included the PowerPoint that we use to

1
2 train them so they could use it to then train their
3 own employees.

4 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: And, if I may,
5 Council Member, to the top of the question that you
6 asked, guidance was issued to all City Hall
7 leadership at the end of last year. I don't remember
8 the exact date, but it was at the end of last... 12th
9 December 30th, there was a memo that went out
10 citywide to City Hall, uh, City leadership, where the
11 guidance was also included as well.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So as the Council's aware,
13 in 2024, a staff person at ACS communicated with ICE
14 in violation of Local Law 228, resulting in the
15 detention of Jennifer, a mother, who was very
16 distraught. We understand that ACS later sent a
17 bulletin to staff reminding them of the law.

18 How is... will that be something that we should
19 be worried about?

20 DIRECTOR ENGEL: So do... you want me to?

21 So I've talked to ACS about that incident, and
22 this was a mistake on ACS's part that they have
23 admitted that... that, you know, that there was an
24 error on their part. And then they... and I don't
25 recall the specifics of them, but they then ensured

1
2 that there were several mitigation measures that were
3 put into place to make sure that this never happens
4 again.

5 And ACS calls me on a regular basis to ask about,
6 you know, "Should I report this?" "Is this something
7 that counts as assistance with federal immigration
8 enforcement?"

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That's interesting because
10 MOIA filed, uh, the reports that MOIA filed on, uh,
11 compliance for 2023 and 2024, this incident is
12 specifically not included. Could you explain why?

13 DIRECTOR ENGEL: ACS did not... did not inform us
14 of this incident. It was it was excluded, which was
15 part of the mistake that they then admitted later to
16 in paper and which we have, you know, we have now
17 worked out.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So is this on the record
19 somewhere, or you've just erased it from
20 (INAUDIBLE)...

21 DIRECTOR ENGEL: It's... we have responded to
22 letters from the comptroller that have described this
23 incident.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: In terms of, uh, in terms of
3 the trainings, is there a... do agencies provide
4 feedback on the training?

5 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: They did.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And what kind of feedback
7 have they offered?

8 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I can't get into
9 that because the substance of what was discussed is
10 privileged and confidential.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay.

12 I think what we are prodding for is, obviously,
13 feedback and how that is incorporated and
14 understanding to make sure that we are fully
15 responding to the feedback.

16 In terms of the guidance that is provided,
17 obviously, this is a train the trainer model. Are
18 you... are you setting expectations around how
19 agencies are gonna be rolling this out and by when?

20 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: We're... yes. We're
21 working through that right now. We... I can't share
22 anything in regards to a set date or anything to that
23 extent. But...

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: No, I don't want a set date.

25 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yeah, I...

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I want to understand that by
3 a certain date, we are pushing full throttle, that
4 all of our staff have received some touch point
5 around the law, because what we are seeing currently
6 is they have no idea.

7 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: What I mean, Chair,
8 a 100%, we have been laser focused on training
9 agencies. This is, like, a top priority for us. But
10 so the answer is, yes. If we could have done it
11 yesterday, I mean, I can't even remember what day I'm
12 in right now, but we're trying to move as quickly as
13 we can.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. So in terms of, uhm,
15 obviously, the incoming administration has signaled
16 their intention to obviously remove numerous
17 protections for immigrant communities. And our
18 communities are very fearful.

19 And on a daily basis, we hear people who are
20 leaving New York City because of these threats and
21 because of the rhetoric of rolling back or working
22 with this administration.

23 Can you tell me how the City is responding to the
24 following scenarios? And what do the preparations
25 kind of look like?

1
2 So the possibility of ICE agents waiting to
3 apprehend immigrants at or near hospitals, schools,
4 religious institutions, especially if the Department
5 of Homeland Security's protected areas list is
6 changed or rescinded?

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. Again, you know, as I
8 described earlier, we take what we've heard so far
9 from the incoming federal administration very
10 seriously. We've been thinking through this, uh,
11 working across city agencies.

12 And, just to add to what we were discussing
13 earlier, this is a directive coming from our City
14 Hall leadership to provide training to our staff, in
15 particular, front facing staff.

16 We have shared that this is a priority in which
17 commissioners and heads of agencies are expected to
18 take very seriously.

19 Again, it's hard to get into hypotheticals, but I
20 again, you know, we are taking a close look at what
21 may happen in the coming weeks and months, and we are
22 preparing our city agencies to respond.

23 So for instance, I met with the school's
24 chancellor and the Commissioner of the Administration
25 of Children Services to discuss, uhm, how they are

1
2 preparing to support children that might be left
3 unattended as a result of family separation.

4 There are protocols in place in... if that were
5 to take place, but this is the kind of preparation
6 that is going into our preparation for what might
7 come in the couple... in the next couple of weeks or
8 months.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So does the Administration
10 have any guidance for this scenario, which is highly
11 likely?

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So we have been in
13 discussions for with, for instance, houses of worship
14 who you know, again, there's a lot of confusion.

15 I've clarified that there is no existing law that
16 protects these sensitive locations. And as you
17 stated, the Department of Homeland Security may
18 revoke the guidance provided to their immigration
19 enforcement agencies.

20 We've encouraged houses of worship and others to
21 understand their rights as private properties and
22 what to do in a case of immigration enforcement
23 showing up at their doorstep and, uh, what they are
24 required and also entitled to do.

1
2 With respect to our schools and locations, uhm,
3 public and government locations, the guidance and the
4 protocols are clear as to what they have to do, and
5 they are encouraged to speak to our law department
6 for additional guidance.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. In terms of temporary
8 protected status, we've had some recent renewals.
9 However, we do know that federal government can
10 change any and all of those renewals and terminate
11 them within very little time - which would leave
12 thousands of people, obviously, without protection,
13 from deportation and the ability to work.

14 What are you... what is the Administration doing
15 to prepare for this particular threat?

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. For years we have been
17 strong advocates of providing legal status and
18 expedited work authorization for immigrant
19 communities. It would be a shame if people were to
20 lose their legal status and their ability to work and
21 be able to contribute to the city and be able to
22 provide for themselves and their families.

23 We'll continue that advocacy moving forward as
24 we've stated before... (CROSS-TALK)

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I think short of the
3 advocacy, and I know you have been leading on this
4 for sure, the... with the scenario, in response to a
5 very specific threat, which has been mentioned over
6 and over again, is the agency preparing, and what are
7 you doing to ensure that we can respond? And how are
8 you doing that?

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We're exploring ways, again,
10 to strengthen and expand our legal services work.

11 I understand that there will be, and there
12 currently is, tens of thousands of people that need
13 comprehensive immigration legal screenings so that
14 they can understand their options. And, you know,
15 this is something that we're exploring and thinking
16 through very carefully.

17 But, yes, the need, is currently significant and
18 will grow. So we are thinking through our options.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Has the Administration
20 committed to... committed funding, expanded funding,
21 not the ongoing, or not renewing funding that was
22 cut? Is there increased funding commitment for the
23 legal services?
24
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So we do not have anything to
3 commit to at the moment. But like I said, we are
4 exploring every option that we have.

5 And, again, this is, uh, ongoing work, and we'll
6 be discussing some of our thinking with our current
7 legal providers soon.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: You mentioned the \$18 million
9 in your testimony, is that... is that increased
10 funding?

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No, that is existing
12 baseline funding available to MOIA to provide
13 immigration legal services.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And that's... is that the
15 current funding for ActionNYC?

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That is, yes, uh, funding
17 available to MOIA to provide immigration legal
18 services to our communities. Again, there are other
19 programs that are administered by HRA, currently OASO
20 as well. And, you know, as I said before, New York
21 City continues to be the city that invests more in
22 legal services than any other city in the country.

23 And, again, we're very committed to our immigrant
24 communities in supporting them with these services.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yes, but to your earlier
3 point, much of the funding is limited, and we are
4 pouring a significant amount into screening and not
5 full legal representation, which is both hard to find
6 and not adequately funded.

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: The... (CROSS-TALK)

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: (INAUDIBLE)...

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Sorry...

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: no...

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: just to clarify, some of
12 the... some of the... many of the discussions with
13 our immigration legal providers have emphasized the
14 need for comprehensive legal screenings because,
15 frankly, many people do not have or are not eligible
16 for immigration relief. And they need to, you know,
17 sit down with someone to discuss their options, and
18 understand carefully what their legal risks are, and,
19 uh, what they may or may not be able to do moving
20 forward, which is why we emphasize this.

21 It is also a good tool to combat immigration
22 legal services fraud.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So we'll go back to
24 immigration legal services, our favorite topic to
25 talk about.

1
2 In in the context of these scenarios again, in
3 terms of a scenario around possible federal attempts
4 to terminate DACA, how is the agency preparing for
5 that scenario?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Again, this is, uhm, this
7 is, you know, a matter especially concerning to us.

8 As we've discussed previously here, we do know
9 that we have staff in city government that may be
10 impacted, and tens of thousands of New Yorkers who
11 are concerned about this.

12 Again, you know, we do quite a lot of advocacy
13 around this issue, and we... and this is why we
14 emphasize immigration legal screening so that people
15 can sit down with someone to review their options.

16 Again, there's very limited things that we can do
17 as a city government because this is a federal
18 government matter, but it is concerning that people
19 may lose their status and ability to work.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: In terms of, uhm, you
21 mentioned in your testimony the materials that MOIA
22 has updated in a variety of languages, which I
23 suspect is a very hot commodity. Certainly, I cannot
24 meet a person who doesn't want these materials.

1
2 How are you... how are you distributing these
3 materials? If you could talk to us specifically about
4 that?

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. We are in regular
6 contact with the large number of immigrant-serving
7 nonprofit organizations and, uhm, both community
8 based and faith based organizations that we are
9 making these materials available to them.

10 We maintain regular communication either through
11 our weekly newsletter and in person, uh, meetings
12 with them, either as collaborators or individual,
13 uhm, meetings with (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Are you sending actually the
15 booklets, printed materials? (CROSS-TALK)

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, absolutely. Our
17 booklets are and will be available in print and
18 digitally. But, yes, absolutely, we want to...
19 (CROSS-TALK)

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Have you sent... have you
21 sent them to city agencies and council offices?
22 Because I haven't received any.

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: They were recently published
24 and updated on our website, and we'll be, again, as I
25 mentioned, we'll be launching a communications

1
2 campaign. If people would like to obtain these in
3 print, they can reach out to us, and we'd we'll be
4 happy to send those.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I would encourage a more
6 affirmative position of sending these materials out
7 rather than asking people to submit forms. We need
8 them.

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Mm-hmm

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Your partners need them. Our
11 council offices need them. Send them out -no forms,
12 no barriers, thank you.

13 In terms of... in terms of additional outreach,
14 you mentioned a communications campaign. Just give us
15 a little color about what that is particularly. What
16 are you anticipating?

17 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Absolutely. I think it's
18 important to have clear messaging out to the
19 immigrant community.

20 One thing that we are particularly concerned of
21 is the heightened fear and anxiety that people may be
22 feeling. And, you know, when panic sets, this can
23 have unintended consequences, like people not, uh,
24 calling on 911 if they are experiencing an emergency,
25 people stop sending their children to schools or

1
2 visiting their local hospitals. And as you mentioned
3 earlier, people deciding to self deport and possibly
4 separate their families.

5 So we want to make sure that they have the most
6 up to date and accurate information, uh, that is also
7 not adding to their fear and anxiety. Which is why we
8 intend to, and we are updating our materials,
9 engaging with local immigrant and ethnic media to get
10 the word out, and working closely with our community
11 and faith based organizations.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, uhm, what state
13 legislation has the City advocated for to be passed
14 related to immigrant New Yorkers?

15 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: We can't really
16 comment on some of the state legislation, but we are
17 sort of noting the two resolutions that are posted at
18 this hearing.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Why can't you comment on what
20 you would be advocating for?

21 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Just to clarify, we don't
22 have a... the Administration doesn't have a public
23 position on proposals, legislative proposals, but our
24 policy team and other teams across the city agencies
25 are reviewing and briefing on the aspects of these

1
2 legislative proposals. And we are advocating for
3 funding.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And while you don't have a
5 position, the mayor is in fact and has been in Albany
6 advocating for policies, advocating for funding.

7 Do we know if our immigrant protections of any of
8 these policy proposals, if any are included in that
9 advocacy or in those asks?

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I'll have to defer to our
11 Legislative Affairs team to answer that.

12 But I do know that this is, in particular, making
13 sure that the City has the funding to be able to
14 support our immigrant communities, and just New
15 Yorkers is a top priority of ours.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Of ours, MOIA, the agency, or
17 the Administration?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: The Administration.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, but at the same time, you
20 don't know if that has actually been a legislative
21 priority ask at the State?

22 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No, I have not been part of
23 those conversations or meetings. So I'll have to
24 defer to our Legislative Affairs team who's engaged
25 in... (CROSS-TALK)

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I quite frankly wish I didn't
3 have to ask this question, that it would be clear.
4 It's the policy... policies of involuntary
5 confinement seem to be the du jour only policy that
6 this administration seems to care about. It is
7 unfortunate that I have to ask you that. I wish we
8 could say, "Of course, we are, at the State, fully
9 advocating for full throated protections."

10 So I think with that, I'm gonna turn it over to
11 Council Member Nurse.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair.

13 I just had a follow-up question. Can you talk
14 about, in your communications plan, what your budget
15 items are for radio or print, billboards, signage
16 outside of just booklets that would go to offices of
17 people who request it?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Most immediately, we're
19 using existing funding. Again, this is a part of our
20 rapid response plan, something we've developed in the
21 last two months as a result, but our work is ongoing.
22 And we'll be working closely with our Budget Office
23 and others to look at the needs that we might have.
24 Uh...

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Will you be requesting
3 money for other media outlets such as radio

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, we'll...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Billboards?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We'll be working closely
7 with, with my colleagues in city government to
8 determine that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. I would... I think it
10 would be really, really important to saturate as many
11 medium platforms as possible. And just walking around
12 in the neighborhoods with you know, on the links, on
13 all of the things that you have available, bus stops.

14 And it's not just about Know Your Rights. I think
15 there should be a lot of messaging to New Yorkers who
16 are not immigrants about the rights that immigrants
17 have - to help dispel misinformation that is coming
18 from, quite frankly, our mayor, your boss. And I
19 agree, I think I would say that I would bet my life
20 that there is no actually a legislative priority
21 happening at the state level. So it would be really
22 great to get that in the follow-up in that has been
23 included.

24 And I don't know if this was asked, and I'm so
25 sorry if I'm repeating a question, what exactly are

1
2 the consequences to a public servant who violates our
3 city laws and calls ICE on someone? Because we know
4 this has happened before.

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes, Thank you for bringing
6 that up again. It's something that I wanted to
7 clarify.

8 You know, I don't mean to perhaps, uh, be too
9 general in my responses, it's that each agency and
10 office is expected to have protocols in place to
11 address staff who may not be following local laws and
12 directives from their leadership.

13 And if that is something that arises, each agency
14 and office will address that through their Human
15 Resources offices and other mechanisms to remediate
16 those situations.

17 Again, each agency has to tailor those responses
18 accordingly, in particular, public safety agencies.
19 We're, uh, MOIA and the Law Department, and is ready
20 to advise with... in that respect, but each agency
21 takes these matters very seriously.

22 And, again, like we discussed, ACS took steps to
23 address these issues when they identified something
24 like what you mentioned.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: For the ACS example, was
3 this... was the determination that there was an
4 individual who was, uhm, interested in doing this
5 because of their personal position, or there was a
6 determination that there was a lack of information
7 about protocol?

8 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Yeah, I'm afraid I'm... I... I
9 don't know. I just don't know...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah.

12 And we... it's sometimes, I mean, it is hard for
13 us to weigh in on any staff, you know, on HR matters,
14 especially if they are ongoing or open. But, again,
15 this is to emphasize that there are protocols in
16 place for those individuals who may accidentally or
17 purposefully not follow directives in our local laws.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Is there any tracking
19 mechanism set up, or are you thinking about setting
20 up any tracking to keep note of if anything like this
21 starts to happen, uhm, so that you can start to see
22 if you have a serious pattern happening?

23 DIRECTOR ENGEL: We don't have anything of that
24 sort now. I think it's certainly something we could
25 take under consideration, uhm, if it, you know, if

1 this starts to become a trend. I think that...
2 that's, uhm, a worthwhile idea.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah, mean, especially if
5 you don't have a tracking mechanism now, you might
6 not be able to understand if it's a trend. So it
7 might be good to start thinking through what that
8 would look like now. Thank you, Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yeah, and also, I mean, uh,
10 if whether or not you're asking for copies or keeping
11 copies of judicial warrants or supporting
12 documentation from liaisons. I mean, we have already
13 had some clear articulation as noted in the FOIL
14 request that, uh, there is collusion happening. There
15 is breaking of the law happening in those particular
16 agencies. So I guess I... we would encourage a more
17 proactive both validation of following the law... we
18 see that, in that instance, it wasn't even reported.
19 It never got corrected; although, obviously you had
20 individual engagement with them. But we have a much
21 longer documented element of breaking the law and
22 would like to see, again, a more proactive engagement
23 with these agencies.

24 In terms of... in terms of engaging, actually,
25 with industries in New York City and advocacy groups,

1
2 has MOIA connected with the hospitality or
3 construction industries? In particular, we know, or
4 we're facing a growing number of worksite ICE rates.

5 How is MOIA engaged with the Department of
6 Consumer and Worker Protection and the Department of
7 Small Business Services to ensure these agencies are
8 fully informed?

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So in terms of engaging with
10 agencies, yes, they are, active participants of, the
11 work that we do through our immigrant our immigration
12 interagency task force and other, uhm, other entities
13 that we, uh, work on these issues together... where
14 we work on these issues together.

15 With respect to the various industries that may
16 be impacted, we work closely with their advocacy
17 organizations. One of the advocacy organizations that
18 participated in our convening of cities, you know,
19 was specifically there to speak to the issues that
20 impact these industries, uhm, in particular, as you
21 mentioned, those industries that contract heavily
22 from the immigrant community.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So you're providing specific
24 guidance on ways these industries can protect their
25 employees and...

1
2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. This particular
3 advocacy group is hosting trainings for industries
4 and also governments to be able to support employers
5 who may be... who may see challenges arise as a
6 result of immigration enforcement activity.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So what stopgap measures or
8 guardrails does the Administration have in place to
9 ensure that NYPD's participation in various joint
10 force task force... task forces with federal
11 authorities does not cross the line and turn into
12 cooperation on immigration enforcement in violation
13 of our local laws? Long question.

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I'll let Rebecca talk about
15 her work with NYPD.

16 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: And I'll... add
17 that, again, like the commissioner has sort of
18 repeated this, but, uhm, nothing has changed in
19 regards to what the local laws are, and those
20 continue to be upheld. I can't go into specifics.

21 I don't know if you can either, Rebecca. But
22 please do if you have more, uhm, in regards to what
23 the NYPD has been doing.

24 But we have, uh, they're following the law as it
25 is enumerated now.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I think you can understand
3 that while the commissioner continues to repeat that
4 in... that phrase in particular, what is... what
5 continues to be disturbing is we have proof of this
6 problem. And so what I need to understand, and you
7 can provide this to the Council, is what are the
8 guardrails that we are additionally putting into
9 place since we know we have had this ongoing problem?

10 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: None that I can
11 speak to now. Again, there are... and even with the
12 questions that you laid out regarding scenarios and
13 planning, there's a lot of work that's happening,
14 that we just... we're not at liberty to discuss.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Did you want to say
16 something?

17 DIRECTOR ENGEL: No, I think she... she answered
18 the question. Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, again, we... we take
20 this this work seriously. And, as I said before, we
21 are limited to what we are mandated to do per
22 Charter.

23 However, I, upon, uhm, after the elections in
24 November, I met with a number of different
25 commissioners, including the interim police

1 commissioner, to these discuss these very issues, and
2 to uplift the importance of our sanctuary, laws.

3
4 You know, my strong message to my colleagues is
5 that we cannot do anything to erode the trust that
6 immigrant communities need to have in our city
7 government so that we are able to best serve them.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I am going to turn it over to
9 Council Member Hudson for questions.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so much, Chair.

11 Hi, good afternoon. Just a couple of questions,
12 and apologies if anything is redundant. I had to step
13 out for a few, so just let me know if you've already
14 answered it.

15 But how... how has MOIA asked immigration
16 advocates for their feedback on how MOIA could be
17 helpful?

18 And do you keep track of immigration legal
19 clinics or similar engagements that are being run by
20 immigration advocates? And can MOIA curate that
21 calendar of events and make it available publicly?

22 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So we've... yes, we've had a
23 numerous amount of meetings with immigrant serving
24 organizations, including advocates. We, as I
25 mentioned, work closely with our, of course, our

1
2 nonprofit contracted partners that are doing this
3 work collaboratively with us.

4 I'll let Enrique talk a little bit more about
5 this work. But as I said at the outset, our work is
6 ongoing, including, you know, listening to today's
7 testimonies and feedback.

8 And we're ready to work with our colleagues in
9 other sectors to prepare for what may come next.

10 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: Yeah, and
11 thank you, Council Member.

12 When we started doing a lot of our work for
13 scenario planning, we began hosting listening
14 sessions to get an idea of how our plans can inform
15 the work that we were doing to ensure that it was
16 responsive to what organizations were doing on the
17 ground.

18 This is ongoing listening session, so we're not
19 done, and we will continue to engage in active
20 engagement with our community.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you.

22 And then just... one other question. Have you had
23 any communication with the incoming Trump
24 Administration about the City's sanctuary policies?

25 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: MOIA? No.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay. And, uhm, the mayor
3 was quoted, I just want to read a quote from him,
4 uhm, following his meeting with, Homan saying, quote,
5 "The law that was passed under the previous
6 administration said that no ICE officer can be in any
7 governmental building. There are exceptions to that.
8 We are looking at those exceptions." End quote.

9 How would you, uhm, what is... what is your take
10 on that quote? And are you advising the mayor
11 directly on the City's sanctuary laws?

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So it's important to say
13 that the mayor has outlined his perspective on
14 addressing his public safety concerns.

15 However, he's also directed us to follow our
16 sanctuary laws that are in place, and the directive
17 is to ensure that all city agencies are adhering to
18 the these laws, which is why we... not only did we
19 send written guidance, but are also conducting
20 training to these agencies so they understand that
21 that message should be clear.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: So you don't think that
23 he's trying to create or looking for ways to create
24 exceptions, whether charter revision or any other
25 means?

1
2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That is not an analysis that
3 we're at MOIA engaged in. So I can't (INAUDIBLE)
4 that... (CROSS-TALK)

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Are you prepared to push
6 back on any attempts to create exceptions to our
7 sanctuary laws?

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So this is something, again,
9 at the outset I said that I am, uhm, appreciative,
10 that both the mayor, deputy mayors, take into account
11 my perspective, both as an immigrant, and an advocate
12 for immigrant rights. And that's something that I
13 will continue to do.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Yeah. Just, you know,
15 I'm... I understand the position that you're in and
16 that you're not able to necessarily answer those
17 types of questions directly. But it is my job to push
18 on behalf of our constituents and all New Yorkers who
19 want to make sure that we have an administration, not
20 solely you in your role as head of MOIA, but that we
21 have the entirety of the administration that is
22 willing to stand up, fight back, and push back
23 against any adverse changes to those laws that we
24 have. So thank you for your answers.

25 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Council Member Krishnan?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Chair
5 Avilés.

6 Hi, Commissioner, good to see you again, too,
7 and, uh, thank you for your work. I think your...
8 your work, your story, your commitment to this issue,
9 uh, speaks for itself. Many of know it, and we have
10 work to do on these issues.

11 But that also being said too, with this
12 administration right now at City Hall, and the
13 administration coming in, uh, in a matter of days to
14 Washington, it has been very concerning, alarming to
15 hear the amount of rhetoric coming from the mayor and
16 City Hall, about, cooperation with the Trump
17 Administration, a lot of things that are, provoking
18 fear and deep concern for many immigrant communities.
19 And we haven't even gotten to the point where the new
20 administration is in yet.

21 It raises serious concerns among legal advocates,
22 immigration advocates about this City Hall's
23 willingness to comply with the strong detainer laws,
24 uh, noncooperation laws that are in place.

1
2 And because of that mixed messaging, and I think
3 that's a very light way of putting it, compared to
4 the contradiction between what we're hearing today
5 and what City Hall is saying publicly, given that
6 glaring contradiction, I think the burden on this
7 administration and on MOIA to do far more to rebut
8 any concerns and questions about whether New York
9 City will comply with the laws that it's had in place
10 and those strong protections on the books and defend
11 the rights of immigrants.

12 I think the burden to put forward affirmative
13 messaging to rebut any concerns and address them is
14 even heightened now, not just because the Trump
15 Administration, but because of what Mayor Adams has
16 done to suggest, whether saying it overtly or hinting
17 at it, that there will be revisions or reviewing or
18 even undermining of the laws we have in place.

19 So given that higher burden now, my questions
20 have to do more with what MOIA is going to do, is
21 doing right now, to rebut that kind of narrative
22 because the facts speak for themselves. No matter
23 what we hear today, too, there's a different
24 perception out there in New York City right now when
25 it comes to City Hall's intentions.

1
2 And so my first question is, I know there's
3 testimony before about the trainings with agencies,
4 how many trainings are being done? How have those
5 trainings been going?

6 What are the kinds of questions you're getting
7 from agencies about complying with the laws that we
8 have in place in New York City when it comes to
9 protecting immigrants' rights?

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you, Council Member.

11 Before I let Lorena talk about the trainings, as
12 I shared earlier, you know, I think we've taken,
13 significant, I think, important steps to ensuring
14 that our sanctuary laws are adhered to, uhm,
15 providing written guidance - a memo that was sent to
16 all city agency leaders, uh, I think was an important
17 and critical step.

18 This came from the mayor's chief of staff, so
19 from leadership, to ensure that our agency heads
20 understands the importance of following our local
21 laws, in particular, sanctuary laws for what whatever
22 may come next.

23 As far as I'm concerned, we are the only city to
24 have done that, and that was done previously, uh,

1
2 eight years ago, and we're ahead of schedule in that
3 regard.

4 And we are also providing these trainings, which
5 I think it's... are very critical. I said earlier,
6 our staff, our City staff is expected to be familiar
7 with these local laws when interacting with our
8 immigrant communities. So these are meant to be
9 refreshers. But it is significant that we are
10 partnering with our city's law department to make
11 sure that we're available to answer any questions
12 agencies may have.

13 And our work is ongoing, so we'll continue to do
14 this work. And I also mentioned, you know, that we
15 are engaged in a communications campaign.

16 We want to be clear that our goal is for us to
17 provide a city government that is available to all
18 New Yorkers, regardless of their immigration status,
19 that not only protects our residents, but that
20 empowers them and provides them with the information
21 and the resources and support that they need.

22 And so we want to be clear about that messaging.
23 New York City does not discriminate based on
24 immigration status.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And, Commissioner, not
3 to cut you off, but I want... I'd like to hear a bit
4 more...

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: detail about... because
7 my concern is, you know, the written guidance is not
8 gonna be sufficient. Right?

9 That's kind of clarification and refreshers on
10 the law, but we're dealing with a very different
11 climate now where far more active intervention is
12 required.

13 So I'm curious to hear more of the details of
14 what that looks like and what those discussions are
15 happening with the agencies.

16 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Happy to (TIMER
17 CHIMES) provide that very quickly.

18 So, MOIA and the Law Department held the training
19 for all agency general counsels, including attorneys
20 from the city council actually. Over 70 agents were,
21 uh, agencies were present. That was on January 7th.

22 In addition to that, there was an additional
23 effort to focus on frontline staff and agencies that
24 had the most touch base with, uh, interactions with
25 immigrant New Yorkers.

1
2 So there was a subset of trainings just for
3 additional information to 12 agencies.

4 In regards to the questions that were raised and
5 the substance of the training, that is confidential.

6 However, just generally speaking, what was
7 covered with the local laws related to the protection
8 of confidential information, access to City property,
9 and limited cooperation with immigrant immigration
10 enforcement. But to the substance of the question and
11 things like that, I'm not at liberty to discuss.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: If... I understand you
13 can't discuss the substance of the questions
14 themselves, but generally speaking, were the
15 questions and discussions about, uh, specific ways of
16 compliance or what generally do the topics cover?

17 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I also can't answer
18 that Council Member.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: I think it's important -
20 sorry, Chair - but it's important for me to, uh, jus
21 to finish up - but, I think it's important, uh, to
22 make sure that our city knows all the efforts, uh,
23 city Hall, uh, this administration and really, MOIA
24 is taking to have those conversations and discussions

1
2 and make sure our frontline staff is fully equipped
3 and prepared for what's to come.

4 Chair, I did have a couple more questions, but I
5 can come back after.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Uh, Council Member Brewer?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. And,
8 thank you, Madam Chair, for all of the work on this
9 hearing.

10 First of all, the TPS (Temporary Protected
11 Status) has been like a godsend, as far as I'm
12 concerned, for the persons, uh, we've been working
13 with.

14 But according to the material that the Chair
15 kindly sent, 2526, a lot of the countries end. How
16 are we gonna deal with TPS? We want TPS. We love TPS.
17 We want more TPS.

18 But this horrible new president might end TPS.
19 I'm concerned. What are we doing about it?

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Council Member... Council
21 Member, we discussed this earlier...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm sorry...

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No, no, it's okay...

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm sorry...

25 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Uhm...

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I was with, just you know,
3 I was with the mayor listening to him talk about the
4 budget.

5 Go ahead?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We discussed this earlier
7 and, uhm...

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Uh, you would have been
10 more interesting, I know, go ahead.

11 (LAUGHTER)

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, we've been doing a
13 tremendous amount of advocacy around this issue, I
14 mean, for months, uh, for years, I'm sorry, and we
15 know how important in the absence of comprehensive
16 immigration reform, TPS, is. And we have been pushing
17 incredibly hard, uh, for what was announced, uh, just
18 last week.

19 And but, yes, you know, we are concerned about
20 people losing their legal status and ability to work
21 and, you know, which is why we're exploring different
22 ways to be able to provide comprehensive legal
23 screenings for people so that they know their
24 options, uh, and to explore other ways, uh, other
25

1
2 ways that they can, uh, they have, uh, relief, so
3 they can have legal status and authority to work.

4 Did you want... (CROSS-TALK)

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Are there other ways? We
6 can't do anything locally, I assume?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Well, just... I
8 just want to mention one thing that we're doing at
9 AHC is that when people come to us for TPS, if they
10 want to, and we, you know, work with them on this, if
11 they want to apply for asylum at the same time, we
12 can do that, and that's really what we've been
13 focused on, and especially the people who we've
14 already applied for TPS. We've also done outreach
15 efforts to go back to them and say, do you also
16 potentially want to apply for asylum to give them
17 alternative pathways?

18 And especially for our young adults, we've also
19 been trying to figure out if we can, help apply them
20 for SIJS (Special Immigrant Juvenile Status) so that
21 TPS is not the only pathway.

22 But at least that's on the practical side, I
23 think the advocacy side is super important here, too.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, I am big on
25 practical.

1
2 Okay, second question is, I know that Ruth
3 Messinger and the bishop and the rabbis all met with
4 the mayor, I think, on Zoom. And, of course, they all
5 briefed me on everything.

6 And the question is, if in fact, I don't... they
7 don't know the answer, even after the meeting, that
8 if ICE shows up at the faith based, if ICE shows up
9 at the school, if ICE shows up, uh, wherever, in
10 terms of Sanctuary City, what exactly are they
11 supposed to do?

12 You have your congregation; you got ICE outside.
13 What exactly are they supposed to do? Because I don't
14 think they understand that.

15 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes, I wasn't part of that
16 conversation... (CROSS-TALK)

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm sure you were...

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I've been in a part of many
19 different conversations with, you know, faith based
20 leaders, houses of worship, and so on. And it's
21 important to clarify that there's no existing law
22 that protects these sensitive locations.

23 I spoke about this earlier. It's a memo from the
24 Department of Homeland Security providing guidance to
25 their immigration enforcement agents that can be

1
2 rescinded in the, you know, in the coming federal
3 administration.

4 Important for everyone to be aware of their
5 rights, especially those houses of worship that are
6 private properties and have protocols in place to
7 know how to respond if federal immigration
8 authorities arrive.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. There is a program
10 in place if they arrive is what you're saying? I
11 didn't understand, I'm sorry.

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Oh, they do have rights.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right...

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That, uh, and they should be
15 speaking with legal counsel. They are... they can
16 reach out to us so we can provide some more guidance
17 about what is it that they can do if immigration
18 enforcement agents show up to their doorsteps.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, what...

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Just like individuals...

21 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: I did just
22 want to add, Council Member... (CROSS-TALK)

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It wasn't clear from the
24 meeting. That's what I understand...

1
2 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: I did just
3 want to add that part of our expanded, uh, Immigrant
4 Rights Workshops, uh, which is now the Immigrant
5 Rights Collaborative, is going to be to provide, uh,
6 presentations on that specific issue to faith based
7 institutions in addition to others.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, these are not, like,
9 the type of people that go to those sorts of things.
10 I'm just saying, so...

11 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: We're in...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You have to figure out...
13 And... And they'll...

14 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: Yeah, we're
15 in direct collaboration...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: work circles around you,
17 I'm just saying... You got Ruth Messinger, there, she
18 can work circles all around you...

19 SENIOR POLICY ADVISER CHAVIRA CANTU: Yeah...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so my question is,
21 do they actually know what happens when the scenario
22 that I just described is going to take place?

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes, this is why the...
24 these trainings, uh, are so important, so that we are
25 able to walk them through...

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but, this... (CROSS-
3 TALK)

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: of what can... (CROSS-TALK)

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: in... in a week. (TIMER
6 CHIMES)

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No, absolutely, which is why
8 we have been meeting with... with the different
9 coalitions or groups that do this work. And, uh, we
10 want to get this information out as soon as
11 possible... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, one final... One
13 last question, I'm going to ask IBO to do this, but,
14 to me, we put all this money into these amazing
15 migrants, whom I have great respect for... I mean, if
16 you were in a worker training program, and you got
17 ,you know, x dollars were paid to have you get
18 through the OSHA program, you wouldn't say, "Good-
19 bye! Go to Minnesota! Go to Texas! We don't want you
20 anymore." Craziess, that we are spending millions of
21 dollars, families and individuals, and saying, "Good-
22 bye!"

23 So, do we know exactly how much... I know this...
24 Whatever the mayor said on the phone today, I don't
25 know, it's \$4 billion, \$6 billion, whatever his

1
2 number is, I have no idea what that means. So my
3 question is, per family, per individual, what is the
4 general amount that the city of New York has
5 invested? Because if you look at this as a cost
6 benefit, it's insane to tell them, good-bye. In my
7 opinion...

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: For recently arrived
9 immigrants, Molly can talk about it...

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Well, so I... we
11 have to defer to OMB on the per diem...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's not a good idea...
13 Go ahead...

14 (LAUGHTER)

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: That's the... that
16 is the, uh, what we have to do in terms of the actual
17 dollar amount so we can get back to you on that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Because I do
19 believe, if you look at this from standing back,
20 looking at all the money we've invested, why in the
21 world are we saying to people, we have jobs, etcetera
22 - So what is the City's plan to try to keep these
23 families here? Literally, not send them away?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So we've been
25 working, as you know, across city agencies to give

1
2 people as much supports as we can, including, I
3 think, the last numbers I saw as SBS has verified
4 that through the Workforce One Centers, we have been
5 able to get hired more than a 1,000 migrants who
6 we've also helped to get their work permits. So we
7 continue to try to do everything we can to support
8 people in their journey.

9 That doesn't necessarily mean staying in our
10 shelter system. That means everything that they need
11 to integrate into society and figure out what makes
12 the most sense in terms of getting apartments, in
13 terms of figuring out where is best for them and
14 their family...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I know it's a slow,
16 uh, process. I got it. A 1,000 is good. Many more
17 need... And I would suggest trying to keep some of
18 this shelter and keeping this process going.

19 Look at the money we put into these people, and
20 they're wonderful. Thank you very much, before I get
21 more frustrated.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I share the frustration.

23 I wanted to know, did, uh, the mayor commit to
24 any additional resources that we need to address this
25 issue?

1 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No.

2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Oh, surprising.

3 In terms of... I just want a clarification for
4 the record. Commissioner, can you clarify MOIA's
5 perspective about what the exceptions are to the
6 sanctuary laws?
7

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: The current exceptions?

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yes.

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: What are commonly known as
11 Criminal Carveouts - Do you want to talk about this,
12 Rebecca? Yeah.

13 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Could you tell me which sanctuary
14 law you're referring to? Because there are several.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Let's, talk about
16 particularly the Criminal Carveouts.

17 DIRECTOR ENGEL: For the Criminal Carveouts?

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yes...

19 DIRECTOR ENGEL: You mean for detainers? So...

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yes. The one that there's
21 been a whole lot of mythology spread by the
22 Administration on.

23 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Yes. So, under our current
24 detainer law, NYPD or DOC, is not allowed to honor an
25 ICE detainer unless, one, somebody has been convicted

1
2 of a violent or serious crime, which is defined later
3 on in the statute, or if they are a possible match in
4 the terrorist matching database.

5 Those are the two exceptions.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So those... there is a
7 process to address violent crimes?

8 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And is MOIA of the opinion
10 that people should be not offered due process prior
11 to conviction and sent to ICE?

12 DIRECTOR ENGEL: I mean, certainly, we are of that
13 opinion. But I don't know exactly, uh, if you're
14 asking about our opinion on the law. We can't... we
15 follow the law and (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

16 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay.

17 DIRECTOR ENGEL: Each other (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-
18 TALK)

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I'm... I'm glad to hear you
20 follow the law. But I think we share the opinion that
21 everyone deserves due process. Is that correct?

22 I shouldn't even be asking this question, quite
23 frankly. But I just want to be sure, since there have
24 been such strange, uh, contradictory messages.

1
2 Okay. I think, I'm gonna ask OASO a couple of
3 questions. You've been patiently awaiting the
4 spotlight, and then I will turn it over to Council
5 Member Krishnan.

6 So in terms of, uh, reporting suggests that the
7 incoming administration, we just talked about the
8 TPS. Can you, in that guise, can you talk to us about
9 how the Asylum Application Help Center is preparing
10 to pivot the applications from TPS to others?

11 I think you just started actually talking about
12 that.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Yeah, I think we're
14 obviously in consultation with advocates and lawyers
15 about what makes the most sense.

16 I think at this point we are still going to focus
17 on the redesignations. So we obviously just got the
18 redesignations, but we're really, really focused in
19 the coming months on asylum and SIJS, and really,
20 because we know that that is, uh, less precarious at
21 this current moment, but we're still going to help
22 people who need CPS or work authorization. We're just
23 gonna prioritize those two more.

24

25

1
2 And if there's other, uhm, immigration reliefs
3 that come out that make it, uhm, that are sort of low
4 impact, we'll also focus on those as they come up.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And how is the help center, I
6 guess, preparing to engage in this communication with
7 individuals about their options?

8 Like, are you proactively, or do you have a plan
9 to proactively reach out and how you will be triaging
10 them?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: We have been
12 proactively using the data that we collect on a
13 central level. On central level, I mean, just in my
14 office.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Right.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: No one else really
17 has access to it. We've been using that to help the
18 shelters identify who may be eligible for one of
19 these appointments, who hasn't affirmatively told us
20 either way if they've applied through case management
21 or through their initial, their initial, uhm,
22 interviews when they come into our system, and then
23 using that outreach to get them an appointment so
24 that we can really talk about their options and
25

1
2 figure out what makes the most sense for that
3 individual and that family.

4 So we have been doing more proactive outreach,
5 including calling through... we've done series of
6 calling through lists that we then burn, but calling
7 through lists to see if we can get more appointments.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: If, uhm, in the case that
9 restrictions start to certainly arise, is the help
10 center preparing to engage with local service
11 providers? And what does that look like both in
12 funding and communication?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So we actually for
14 the next year, we're really pushing for the state to
15 reinvest in the AHC, and it will look different. The
16 goal is for it to look different.

17 The goal is to get to a place where we're funding
18 more legal representation and more nonprofits that do
19 that, and less our high impact model, uh, pro se
20 model.

21 And so that is the goal, and that's what we're
22 working with the State on, uhm, to make that shift,
23 because we know that the cases that are going to come
24 up are more complicated. And we've done what we

1
2 needed to do as part of the emergency response of
3 this.

4 So we want to sort of lower the amount of
5 availability at our AHC and sort of make more money
6 available to nonprofits if we get that money again
7 from the state.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Got it.

9 So, can you... I think this is part of your state
10 advocacy. Can you tell us, is OASO engaged in any
11 federal advocacy?

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, yes, we
13 continue to be engaged in both state and federal
14 advocacy.

15 You know, we're very, tied into TPS advocacy. I
16 think the mayor has been very clear. We want people
17 to be able to work. Whatever gets people the ability
18 to work quicker and faster and better, uh, that
19 continues to be our main focus of our federal
20 advocacy, and on the state side, it's really on
21 funding.

22 But I'll hand it over to Kelly if there's
23 anything else you wanted to add.

24 DIRECTOR YZIQUE-ZEA: Hi, Chair, my name is Kelly
25 Yzique-Zea, I'm the Director of Immigration. Our

1 policy at OASO and... So we had created a advocacy
2 strategy for the lame duck session, which would, like
3 Molly mentioned, Director Schaeffer mentioned, it is
4 going to be focusing a lot on TPS. It focused on TPS,
5 work authorization, and also on, you know, pushing
6 Administration to finalize rules that would, expedite
7 work permits, and also protection for DACA and
8 Dreamers. And as we're going into incoming
9 administration, we're also kinda analyzing, uhm, what
10 that is going to look like in the makeup and then
11 create a. advocacy strategy for that as well.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

14 In terms of, uh, the City restricts, uh, nonlocal
15 government personnel who enforce civil or criminal
16 laws from accessing nonpublic areas. We've touched on
17 this earlier today, like city property, shelters,
18 limiting collection and release of personally
19 identifying information.

20 Can you tell us how OASO is ensuring compliance
21 with these laws, uh, which apply to all New Yorkers
22 regardless of citizenship or immigration status - and
23 the specific context of this quasi shelter system for
24 immigrant newcomers?

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So the policies are
3 pretty clear on site access in all of our sites, and
4 we've worked really hard with our sheltering agencies
5 to make sure that they are... that they have their
6 policies, that everybody knows their policies, and
7 the right people know their policy. And what I mean
8 by that is that their escalation policies are very,
9 very critical when it comes to what happens on a
10 site.

11 So if somebody comes on-site and asked to be let
12 inside, and that is not someone who has already been
13 on the list, that someone that they know is coming,
14 they need to know who on site to go to, and that
15 person needs to know if there's any questions who
16 then to take that up to in their organization, and
17 then how that information gets to OASO, gets to MOIA,
18 and so we've been really working hard with those
19 agencies to make sure those policies are tight.

20 So site access has been really, really critical
21 for us, as well as our data privacy is something that
22 is also incredibly critical.

23 We own the data. OASO owns the data for our
24 system. Each agency, uh, makes sure their staff is
25

1
2 trained on data privacy and also has specific
3 requirements for contractors and vendors on site.

4 We also limit the access to the data based on
5 your current position. So if you... if you're an
6 admin staff, you only get to see the data that you
7 need in preparation of your job.

8 And the way that... and there's very clear
9 guidelines on how you transmit that data if you ever
10 need to. And so we just continue to work with our
11 agencies on all of those pieces.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So who's responsible for
13 training shelter staff?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So it depends. MOIA
15 is doing city overall, so I can turn it over to them
16 on that. But in terms of vendor staff, that's really
17 part of their contracts.

18 So there's specific training, uhm, training
19 pieces as part of their contracts.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So is it safe to say that
21 everyone has been trained on the laws around
22 accessing shelter?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: On site access?

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: On site access.
25

1 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: On site access - or
2 at least who to go to. Everyone knows they're not
3 supposed to let anybody in, and they know who to go
4 to on site if there's any issues, if somebody comes
5 that they're... that is not supposed to be there.

6 I even get carded every time I go to a site, and
7 I have to... I'm stopped at the door, and then they
8 call somebody who calls somebody who says I'm... if
9 I'm allowed in or not.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And does the training include
11 what to do if presented with a judicial warrant?

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: That... that... it
13 depends on, again, it's sort of different in the DHS
14 system and the non DHS system. But in terms of
15 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

16 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Let's talk about the system
17 that you're engaged with.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: I'm engaged with
19 both systems.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Oh, okay...

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: But in terms... In
22 terms of the judicial warrants, they know who to go
23 to on site, who then brings it to normally the
24 general counsel, or whoever else in the Law
25

1
2 Department apparatus in their sites, can sign off on
3 if that makes sense, or not, if it's an actual
4 judicial warrant.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: How is OASO ensuring
6 compliance with privacy laws in the specific context
7 of the mailroom for newcomers?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So it'll be...
9 we're using the same system we use for everything.

10 I mean, each site right now does manage mail, and
11 so that is also part of the privacy that we use for
12 all of our data.

13 The staff that has access to mailroom data will
14 only... will be required to follow all of our data
15 privacy provisions.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Mm-hmm

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Uhm, you know, so
18 it'll... it's not gonna be anything different than
19 our other procedures when it comes to operations.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. And in terms of, uhm,
21 the Administration has been providing the Council
22 with monthly details of the 60-day notice request but
23 has not provided that information for December. When
24 will the Administration be able to share the monthly
25 information?

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: I'd have to follow
3 up on that.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: The Administration has
5 announced impending closure of several migrant
6 shelters. Could OASO please confirm whether space
7 will be made available for individuals and families
8 in the traditional shelter system run by DHS?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So we're working
10 with DHS and our non DHS systems to ensure that every
11 single person has a shelter bed.

12 It's, uh, shelter placement is a difficult dance
13 of what we have available, what's close to somebody's
14 school, and what the individual family wants. So we
15 will make those, uhm, we will make those
16 determinations as those sites close.

17 Not everybody will go to a DHS site. You know, we
18 still have other sites open, but I will say by June,
19 we will have closed over 80% of our non DHS system
20 that we've ever had open.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I'm currently engaged with a
22 good number of folks in non DHS systems that are
23 receiving very alarming messages from shelter staff
24 that people interpret they have to leave right now.
25 And it's causing an enormous amount of chaos,

1 particularly in the guise of this administration
2 coming.

3
4 So how are you communicating with provider staff
5 around how they are communicating with people?
6 Because a one off is something, but this... we're
7 getting incoming from all over that there's really
8 problematic messaging in people understanding they're
9 getting pushed out into the street in the middle of
10 winter.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So if you have any
12 specific example...

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: There are many...

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Yes, and I would
15 love to look into those.

16 We give notice in every language, and we have
17 case managers as well as front door staff talk to
18 guests as we, uh, as we have to make moves, as we
19 have to move people to other shelters.

20 So if there is specific examples, we're happy to
21 follow up on them.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: We'll certainly follow up
23 with you.

24 In terms of... I guess I can pass it over to
25 Council Member Krishnan.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you, Chair.

3 I just wanted to followup my questions I was
4 asking before, and I think, you know, Council Member
5 Brewer and I were saying the same thing, which is
6 more is required here in this situation and it's very
7 concerning.

8 I understand the written guidance and the
9 communication with agencies, but I'd like to hear
10 more about what efforts this administration and MOIA
11 are taking.

12 And I understand the mayor has not given you all
13 the budget that you need. You won't say it, but I
14 will say that. And you need to be doing far more to
15 fund you all in this effort given what's coming.

16 So my question is, you know, I understand,
17 Commissioner, before, as you said, there may not be
18 protections in place for sensitive vocations, but
19 what effort is MOIA making to run Know Your Rights
20 Workshops in schools, you know, in early child
21 education centers, in faith based institutions -
22 partnering with legal services organizations, other
23 immigrants rights groups on the ground to be out
24 there as much as possible, informing people of their
25 rights, and their access to resources?

1
2 working closely together to reenvision how we are
3 providing, legal assistance through the Asylum
4 Application Help Center, pivoting to working closer
5 with our community based and legal service nonprofit
6 providers to make sure that information is getting to
7 the community in their neighborhoods, in their
8 language, and with a cultural competency that we'll
9 need to have so that people clearly understand what
10 is occurring.

11 It is difficult to get ahead of ourselves,
12 because although we take what we've heard so far
13 seriously, we do not want to add to the panic that
14 already exists. It's something that we just have to
15 find a way to navigate very carefully.

16 But as I said earlier, we will, through our
17 communications work and our partnerships, continue to
18 message that our commitment is with our immigrant
19 communities, and we do not want to do anything to
20 erode the trust they need to have in their city
21 government because it's just too important for us.

22 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: And if I may add,
23 Council Member, in addition to what to what the
24 commissioner laid out, we also expanded our current
25

1
2 program that we have, which is called the Immigrant
3 Rights Workshops.

4 We are currently contracting through that
5 network, 12 organizations that are gonna be providing
6 240 Know Your Rights sessions from January until June
7 30th.

8 We are triaging some of these trainings and
9 focusing right now. Phase one is in shelters. We're
10 also working with faith based institutions to roll
11 that out there, schools in addition to libraries.

12 I'm happy to report that our first session I'm
13 always like I forget what day I'm in, I think it was
14 Tuesday. In the last two... in the last two sessions
15 when we just sort of launched this effort, we were at
16 Hall Street and supported a 190 people.

17 So we're, you know, we're sort of ramping things
18 up, but I just wanted to add that as well.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you for the
20 information.

21 If you can all send that information to the
22 Committee, too, about the plans and the workshops,
23 we'd really appreciate that.

24 You know, I really feel that, MOIA, you all,
25 understanding (TIMER CHIMES) more is coming, should

1
2 really be out there in our neighborhoods, on the
3 streets with organizations, making sure that everyone
4 is aware of these resources. And so I look forward to
5 hearing more about what those plans are.

6 My other my final two questions was one on, uhm,
7 legal services. We talked a lot about it. You know
8 how I feel, how important it is to have access to
9 counsel.

10 What conversations, if any, are happening to fast
11 track funding from the administration side for legal
12 services organizations?

13 Their caseloads are going to increase. They need
14 to be ready to take in intake that'll be coming in,
15 uhm, much more frequently, too, but their contracts
16 are burdensome, unfortunately, because of the City
17 contracting process.

18 Has there been any discussion about making sure
19 they can expedite funding for them?

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. I know that many of the
21 teams that work on these matters, whether it's
22 Mayor's Office of Contract Services, Mayor's Office
23 Nonprofit Services, or agency ACLs, they're all
24 working day and night to expedite payments and make
25

1
2 sure that our nonprofit contractors have what they
3 need.

4 We also provide assistance, meaning MOIA.
5 Whenever we have a procurement out, we make sure to
6 work very closely with the various offices that
7 oversee this work and ensure that this information
8 and these processes are accessible to our immigrant
9 serving nonprofits.

10 That said, I do acknowledge, as someone who led a
11 nonprofit and had to do this work on the other side,
12 I do know that there is much to improve...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: We know it's a broken
14 process.

15 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: But, you know, to your
16 earlier point, Council Member, I, you know, I do
17 acknowledge that we need to be out there, which is
18 why from my beginning... from the beginning of my
19 tenure here, I've made it a point to be very much out
20 in the community, and I will continue to do so, uh,
21 responding to any emergency that might come up, uh,
22 and working collaboratively with those groups, and
23 nonprofits that are very much rooted in community
24 serving people where they're at.

1
2 And I just have a tremendous amount of admiration
3 for those groups that do this work. It's not easy,
4 especially organizations that are doing the work to
5 support families whose loved ones are detained.

6 All that, we are exploring ways to best support
7 the organizations doing that work. And as I said
8 earlier, we're working closely with OASO to figure
9 out ways to get more, additional support to them.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And we appreciate your
11 leadership there, and I've seen it, too.

12 So my final question, just to clarify with OASO,
13 I think there is some lack of clarity about the
14 future plans of OASO when it comes to the work. I
15 think you talked before about prioritizing TBS, SIJS,
16 and asylum cases.

17 You mentioned working talking to nonprofit legal
18 services organizations about ways to make sure their
19 full representation can happen, too.

20 Can you provide a bit more detail - what are
21 those conversations, and how are legal service
22 providers gonna be incorporated into this work more,
23 and how quickly, too?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, I mean, this is
25 it's all preliminary. So we've started talking to

1
2 groups about the fastest way we can actually get
3 funding to groups. We've been working with MOIA on
4 ways to get more money through the ActionNYC
5 contracts, through other contracts.

6 I don't have anything definitive to tell you
7 today, but we have been working with groups to figure
8 out what's that best funding match. So if we get more
9 money from the State, which we're really pushing for,
10 we can then funnel that as quickly as possible to
11 nonprofits, and sort of, again, ramp down our pro se
12 model a little bit to more match the lower amount of
13 people who are coming in, and more ramp up the money
14 that we put through nonprofits.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: I think that full
16 representation is gonna be so important. Thank you.
17 Thank you, Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: OASO, Molly, could you send
19 to the Council, documentation on how many employees
20 have been trained at sites on their duties to follow
21 the law and privacy?

22 DIRECTOR ENGEL: I'd have to defer to the agencies
23 on that, but we can follow up.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. For in taking a quick
25 shift back to the legal support centers, are the

1
2 immigration legal support centers inclusive of
3 ActionNYC, or is it just rebranding...

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, I know that...

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: ActionNYC?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I think this might be get a
7 little confusing, because we're talking about
8 different programs, and, you know, we don't we no
9 longer use the term ActionNYC...

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Exactly...

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We received a lot of
12 feedback about...

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yet some of your materials
14 still say ActionNYC.

15 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Exactly.

16 So we're trying to move away from that, because
17 we receive feedback that that is just it's
18 difficult... it's difficult to understand from the
19 perspective of our migrant communities what ActionNYC
20 means.

21 But that's besides the point, there's a number of
22 different programs, uh, that we fund and do this work
23 through nonprofit contracted partners that we're
24 looking at Director Schaeffer mentioned a number of
25 things that we're exploring.

1
2 I don't want to get too ahead of myself so that
3 so as not to confuse the providers. Uhm, however...

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: They're confused already...

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: However, the ongoing process
6 to selecting the pro... the nonprofit providers that
7 will be part of the MOIA Immigration Legal Support
8 Centers is ongoing. It is a process that is currently
9 open, so I cannot say too much about that.

10 As you know, these things are very delicate. But
11 we will be selecting the those providers very soon.
12 And our timeline is to have that program launch by
13 July 1st of this summer and have enough, or ample
14 time, for these providers to prepare to launch, uh,
15 these services.

16 This may or may not include existing nonprofit
17 providers, but, again, I need to be very careful
18 about the what I say here because the process is
19 ongoing.

20 However, as Director Schaeffer mentioned, we're
21 exploring ways that we can continue to support
22 existing nonprofit providers, and legal service
23 providers, who will see additional work as a result
24 of whatever may come next.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So I think you said the
3 immigration legal support centers is broader than
4 what is currently existing for ActionNYC?

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That program...

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Potentially...

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That program, you know, we
8 laid out the specifics in our Rfx (Request for "x"),
9 uh, consist of contracting with nonprofit providers
10 to establish legal support centers in immigrant
11 communities.

12 So the goal is to establish 25 of these centers
13 throughout New York City so that immigrant
14 communities can access these services in the
15 communities that they live and in the languages that
16 they speak.

17 And that is those are principles really important
18 to us. We understand that there's often fear and
19 concern for immigrant communities to leave their
20 neighborhoods to access these services.

21 So that is the ongoing process. We will be
22 selecting those providers very soon. They will be
23 informed if they did receive the contract, and we
24 will be working with them to establish these centers,
25 these programs, and hope to launch by July 1st.

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2 Aside from that, there are a number of different
3 programs with existing, nonprofit providers. We're
4 going to be in conversation with them about ways we
5 can continue to support their work.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I understand the confusion.

7 How will the \$18 million be distributed across
8 the three-year plan?

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Again, a lot of this
10 information is laid out in a very comprehensive and
11 detailed RfX. There should not be a confusion about
12 this...

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Well you can answer the
14 question right now.

15 Uhm, So since you already have it in the RfX,
16 how's the \$18 million gonna be distributed across the
17 three-year plan?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, we laid out a plan for
19 each of the providers to receive approximately two...
20 \$750,000 each.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: What's the cut each year, not
22 to each individual provider? So what's the allocation
23 per year?

24

25

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2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Generally, and this is in
3 partnership, just to make sure it's clear with the
4 Department of Social Services.

5 So the team there that oversees contracts will
6 provide additional information about the way that
7 these contracts, once we select the organizations,
8 will be executed.

9 Generally speaking, and I think we outlined this
10 in RFX, \$250,000 per year over three years, that the
11 organizations will receive to establish these
12 programs.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So per year, the total that
14 is expected to be dispersed is what?

15 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Like I said, it's
16 approximately \$750,000 per... (CROSS-TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: \$750,000 per...

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: per center for three years.

19 And, again, you know, again, to emphasize, this
20 is the only program of its kind in the country. We
21 have not heard of any other city making this type of
22 investment in immigration legal services provisions,
23 much less this much funding across three years per
24 provider.

1
2 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: So for the full
3 year, uh, just to add to what the commissioner
4 shared, it's \$6.2 per year.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: That's all I was asking for,
6 thank you.

7 In terms of, uh, would you be able to share the
8 list of the 25 providers, or is that...

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Once the selection is
10 completed, yes, we will publish the list...

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And that... the selection is
12 gonna be in July or (INAUDIBLE)...

13 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No, it's ongoing right
14 now... (CROSS-TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Current, ongoing, okay.

16 We'd love to see a list of the providers as soon
17 as determined.

18 What are the specific immigration services that
19 will be provided under the legal service?

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: As outlined in the RFX,
21 there's a menu of services, including comprehensive
22 legal screening, full representation. It really
23 depends on what the providers have proposed and those
24 who have been selected will provide.

1
2 Again, this is to acknowledge that different
3 immigrant communities will have different needs; they
4 need to be tailored based on those needs.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So which financial plan will
6 the funding be added to and under which agency?

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: As I mentioned, this is a
8 partnership with the Department of Social Services
9 and HRA.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Is it, uh, that's the current
11 ActionNYC contract?

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, again, to clarify, we no
13 longer use the term ActionNYC. It is the existing
14 contractors. I know, uh, that, uhm, there's a
15 tremendous amount of advocacy to continue with the
16 existing contractors, but we've informed them that
17 their contracts have been extended through the end of
18 June, and, we'll be working with them to finalize
19 their work in transition.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yeah. In terms of... in terms
21 of the extension to June, did the Administration
22 provide funding for all this work that we're
23 expecting providers to do with an incoming
24 administration and everything we talked about today?

1
2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, yes, there will be
3 funding through the end of the term of the contract
4 as extended. But, again... (CROSS-TALK)

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Is there... Is there new
6 funding being added for the expectation of the
7 increased volume of work for the legal service
8 providers currently?

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, again, we're exploring
10 our options. Can't commit to anything at the moment.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So is the answer there is no
12 current funding for the providers for all this
13 expanded work - for MOIA itself, who will be
14 directing individuals who will be calling for
15 assistance to the providers, there is no increased
16 resources for that increased level of work that we
17 are expecting currently?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Nothing that we can announce
19 to...

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay.

21 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: today.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Oh, you were saying, hi,
23 okay. Okay, uhm, uh, Council Member Brewer?

24

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Just quickly, I did go to
3 a couple of trainings with School District 3
4 [Project] Open Arms. Hundreds of people showing up.

5 And one of the issues that came up yesterday was,
6 if you are in, again, faith based community, many
7 people raise their hands when asked, are you in a
8 space that has people coming and going?

9 The answer was, yes.

10 So what was suggested was that everybody in that
11 group either RSVP, which is a strange thing to do
12 before going to religious service, get a wristband,
13 and if none of the above - in other words, you're not
14 entering that space unless you have your wristband,
15 and your name is on the list.

16 Is that something that you would recommend?

17 Obviously, in a school, students and faculty
18 would already be there.

19 But for these other more community spaces, that
20 was a recommendation, because then if you're not on
21 that list, you're obviously not welcome.

22 Would you recommend that as part of the training?

23 It seemed to me in these very stringent
24 challenging times, it made some sense.

25 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Familiar with the Open Arms?

1
2 Uh, yes, thank you for the recommendation. We'll
3 take these recommendations. Obviously, that there's a
4 lot of need for information and training, so we'll
5 take any recommendation and any feedback, and we'll
6 work closely with our agencies and our contractor
7 clients...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And with the folks from
9 Open Arms would also be my suggestion.

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. The public school
11 system is, as you may have seen, they've provided
12 guidance to their superintendents and staff, and
13 we'll continue to work with them.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

16 I want to honor, uh, the time that we committed to
17 with you both. I guess I would like to... I would
18 like to thank you for being here, and I know we are
19 we are facing very uncertain times.

20 I have to underscore what you have heard here
21 over and over again is we want full throated
22 affirmation of fully protecting our immigrant
23 communities, not contradictions, not fuzzy language,
24 and certainly no rollbacks.

1
2 I know you are not in control of that in
3 particular, but that is certainly our expectation as
4 clear affirmation that we're going to protect and
5 support people with dignity and use language that is
6 dignified of our city and state and our community
7 members.

8 And we will follow-up on specific questions.

9 Thank you for the work. And, thank you for being
10 here today.

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, thank you, Chair, for
12 holding this hearing, and Council Members, and Public
13 Advocate. Again, I want to reiterate my thanks to the
14 community organizations and the directly impacted
15 individuals, especially those individuals who are
16 here to testify and share their stories. I know how
17 hard it is to share their story, but it is also
18 important to humanize the impact that this is having
19 on our immigrant New Yorkers.

20 And I also want to take the opportunity to thank
21 the MOIA staff, OASO staff, and all my colleagues in
22 my city governmental. Often their work and their
23 advocacy for immigrant communities goes unseen, but I
24 want to acknowledge them and thank them for their
25 work. Thank You

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CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, now we will hear from a panel consisting of New York State Assemblymember Catalina Cruz, directly impacted individuals, and organizations serving immigrant communities.

(PAUSE)

Assemblymember Catalina Cruz; Claudia Valdivia, Dhaliem Alban, from Make the Road New York; Dhaliem?

(PAUSE)

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Oh, okay, Assemblymember Catalina Cruz? Thank you for joining us.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER CRUZ: Thank you. Do I have to press this one? All right. It's interesting being on the other end of this. Thank you and good to see you, again, Council Member Aviles.

I am Assemblymember Catalina Cruz, and I represent the 39th assembly district in Queens, a community that embodies the rich diversity and resiliency of our immigrants.

As the sponsor of the Access to Representation Act that, the first former Dreamer elected in the, state of New York, I bring both legislative

1
2 experience and personal insight on the challenges
3 faced by our immigrant communities.

4 I want to thank you as well as, *the* Gale Brewer
5 for all of your work in advocating for our immigrant
6 communities. It is really important to have partners
7 all across the state and across all levels of
8 government in getting this work done, especially when
9 we have so many people who claim to be our partners
10 and are leaving us behind.

11 I want to first talk about the Access to
12 Representation Act and the importance of this piece
13 of legislation and the investment for our immigrant
14 communities.

15 The ARA would guarantee legal representation for
16 low income New Yorkers facing removal proceedings.
17 This means residents, asylum seekers, undocumented
18 people, anyone facing a deportation.

19 People become removable for a million reasons,
20 because an attorney filed the wrong paperwork,
21 because they couldn't afford an attorney and went to
22 a notario, because they overstayed their visa,
23 because their status lapsed, because maybe 20 years
24 ago, they were a different person and committed a
25 crime and now are better, but got permanent residency

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2 and now are seeking citizenship and now are being
3 removed, or simply because they crossed the border in
4 search of a better life and have no status.

5 And I say all of this, because every single one
6 of these people, no matter how they ended up in
7 removal proceedings, under our constitution, they
8 still have rights, and they still should be protected
9 in spite of what other colleagues of ours may think.

10 And it is why we push forward With The Access To
11 Representation Act because while it's, uh,
12 immigration cases are civil in nature, they have your
13 rights at stake. Whether you can stay with your
14 family or not, depends on what happens in those
15 cases. And it is why it's so important to bring an
16 attorney with you at those particular times.

17 Four out of Five immigrants that enter removal
18 proceedings don't have an attorney. And when you have
19 an attorney what ends up happening is that you are 10
20 times more likely to actually succeed in that
21 particular case.

22 This isn't just about those particular numbers.
23 It's about the humanity of the families that are
24 facing a removal proceeding and that are going to
25 thrive once they are successful.

1
2 And what was happening in practice 10, 20 years
3 ago, before the detainer law, was that someone who
4 was simply being accused of a crime, whether they
5 were guilty or not, if they were picked up by ICE
6 within those first 24 hours in holding, they didn't
7 have an opportunity to fight their case. They didn't
8 have an opportunity to demonstrate that they were
9 completely innocent, and that could mean someone who
10 had asylum. That could mean someone who was
11 undocumented. That could even mean someone who had a
12 permanent residency, and that could also mean someone
13 who was completely undocumented.

14 And I think it's important to note that this
15 doesn't mean ICE can't do their job. They can still
16 pick up someone, remove them. They can still put them
17 in deportation proceedings. All this means is that we
18 as a state are not going to facilitate their job,
19 that we're not gonna spend the money that we need in
20 order to meet the needs of every other New Yorker
21 doing the job of ICE.

22 This would instill confidence in institutions
23 like schools, hospitals, law enforcement, and ensure
24 immigrants feel safe when accessing these critical
25 services.

1
2 I remember when I used to practice, I had a one
3 client who was a domestic violence survivor who told
4 me that the first time that she called the police on
5 her husband, they asked her for her papers.

6 We cannot go back to that time.

7 This might have been 15 years ago, but it could
8 feel like it could be tomorrow with the way things
9 are going.

10 We want to make sure that anyone who needs the
11 help and, frankly, anyone who's accused can actually
12 have their day in court and protect their rights.

13 Fear of deportation prevented many immigrants
14 from seeking necessary medical care, uh, sending
15 their children to school - we all remember what it
16 was like before the Green Light Bill came in and
17 provided people with driver's licenses.

18 And we, here in the city of New York, are
19 somewhat privileged in that people can take the train
20 and not feel as scared. But in upstate New York, you
21 have farm workers who, if they don't have a driver's
22 license, if they are scared, they're not taking their
23 kids to school. They're not going to the doctor.

24

25

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2 And so we want to make sure that, as a state, we
3 have a uniform policy of saying, no, we will not do
4 the job of ICE for them.

5 You know, and we have always been the kind of
6 state that leads on many of these issues, and we
7 should continue to be no matter who is at the
8 leadership nationally.

9 I've worked to make sure that, uhm, that my
10 constituents feel protected, and I want to thank you
11 all for doing the same thing for all of the city of
12 New York.

13 I want to say two things before I finish, and
14 that's the amount of money that we are investing in
15 legal services. We started about in 2020 with only
16 \$6.4 million, and this past year, in the 2024 budget,
17 we ended up with \$74 million, and that is to support
18 immigrant legal services, the Office for New
19 Americans, and other services that are similar to
20 that. And this year, we're coming in to the state
21 budget negotiations seeking over a \$100 million
22 for... to supplement the work that the city of New
23 York is already doing, and doing it statewide, in
24 addition to making New York for All, as well as, uh,

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2 Access To Representation Act an actual right in the
3 actual law.

4 And what we need, and what... why I want to thank
5 you all, and I know, Council Member Hanif, as well as
6 Council Member De La Rosa have done, uh, resolutions
7 in support of these two pieces of legislation, is
8 that you continue to be our partners, and you
9 continue to speak up for immigrants, especially those
10 who are going to begin to be afraid to do so for
11 themselves.

12 And so I'll leave it at that, and I want to thank
13 you all for the support, and I'm happy to answer
14 questions.

15 And if you would not mind, I just want to say,
16 two sentences in Spanish.

17 (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE) And I know it's not
18 customary to do this. (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much,
21 Assemblymember. You have been an incredible champion
22 for all New Yorkers, including, obviously, immigrant
23 New Yorkers.

24 This partnership between the city and state to
25 reinforce and ensure that protections are statewide

1
2 are so important for our communities - people don't
3 stay in once place - So this council is very
4 supportive of both your legislation and Senator
5 Gounardes's legislation in New York for All. It is
6 critical that we have coherent, clear laws and not a
7 patchwork, uh, which puts everyone in jeopardy.

8 And I will say it is incredibly true that we've
9 invested an enormous amount for laws that keep us
10 safe, quite frankly, and to do any rollback or not to
11 be fully throated in the guise of a federal
12 government that has recently passed a very troubling
13 law, the Laken Riley Act, which does not offer due
14 process and offers indefinite detention for people.
15 It is deeply troubling.

16 And I guess our message to the State is, we need
17 to make sure the whole state is covered and does its
18 job by New Yorkers statewide.

19 So, thank you again for that. We will be pushing
20 and championing as you are in your budget
21 negotiations and pushing our city to do more, because
22 our communities deserve that. Thank you. Gracias.

23 And we are translating this into six different
24 languages.

25 ASSEMBLYMEMBER CRUZ: Oh, that's awesome.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: But I thank you for
3 addressing our Spanish speakers.

4 Next, we are going to have Claudia Valdivia.

5 CLAUDIA VALDIVIA (via translator): Okay.

6 I'm very sad and afflicted for what is happening
7 to my immigrant community here in the United States.
8 I'm sad about myself because we have been harassed by
9 all these things.

10 With a new administration that's coming of the
11 president Donald Trump, I feel that our immigrant
12 community is basically being attacked by him and his
13 organization. He's accusing us of things that
14 completely false. Like, he's saying things like we
15 are coming to steal the jobs from the American
16 people. He even accuses that we are eating animals.
17 That's not true.

18 It's very important that your city maintains
19 excel as a Sanctuary City for all of us.

20 The majority of the people in New York are
21 immigrants, so immigrant distance. And they only come
22 in here for a to get a better job, to have a better
23 future that our countries are not giving us.

24 I don't think it's fair that we are being
25 attacked, and we also have been unprotected.

1
2 I think we have been unprotected, and we are not
3 being protected enough by Mr. MOIA that he's in
4 charge of this. I heard the comments and the plans
5 that they that they have about all these. But I don't
6 think they have any concrete plan how to address this
7 immigration problem and these attacks that are coming
8 to us.

9 Our immigrant people are very afraid, and also
10 they are very scared of the family separations that
11 could be coming now that Donald Trump will be coming
12 to the presidency.

13 If he's doing this, our families will be
14 completely destroyed. As you know, we're immigrants,
15 but we also had children who are US citizens. And
16 will be a totally chaos here for New York City and
17 New York State. Because the (TIMER CHIMES) children
18 will be completely vulnerable. They will not have no
19 choices - they will have two choices - to come back
20 to a country that's strange for them, because they
21 were born in the U.S., or to stay in the U.S., they
22 will not know what to do.

23 And you remember, there also some immigrants and
24 people who are running away from their countries. And
25 the reason of this is that they are running away

1
2 because their lives are in danger in those native
3 countries.

4 Many people in our communities don't come with
5 legal representation yet. And if this happens it will
6 be terrible because as you know, we also are
7 potential weapon... potential weapon for the economy
8 of the United States. We also provide health to the
9 economy or our country.

10 And this will put in danger many good people.
11 Like, for example, the people who deliver food.
12 Right? They will be victims of this.

13 Many people will be victims of this. As you know,
14 as immigrants, we're also taking care of the children
15 of American families; we're cleaning the households,
16 the houses of these American families as well.

17 As you remember, New York is well known because
18 it's a city of immigrants and also have loved
19 immigrants and also they always try to protect us all
20 the time.

21 It's very essential to protect New York
22 immigrants. As you know, the symbol of the Statue of
23 Liberty that was given by France to us, is the symbol
24 of the immigration or (INAUDIBLE) understand the
25 protection that they should provide us.

1
2 And it's not fair that our children, instead of
3 thinking to being a police officer, being something,
4 they have to be thinking something else. They have to
5 be worried that they're going to separate them from
6 their parents. This is very sad.

7 The only thing I want to ask of you, the
8 authorities on New York, don't leave us unprotected.
9 We are depending on all of you.

10 I know that many of you are with us in this big
11 fight that we have. So I believe this is very
12 important for all of us. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

14 CLAUDIA VALDIVIA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 TRANSLATOR: She speaks English very well, so she
16 has (INAUDIBLE) in English, right? The other one is
17 in Spanish, so she will (INAUDIBLE) (SPEAKING FOREIGN
18 LANGUAGE)

19 DHALIEM ALBAN: Thank you for having me here.

20 My name is Dhaliem Alban, and I am youth leader
21 of Make the Road New York and a senior in
22 International High School.

23 I missed school today so I could come here to
24 testify and urge City Council, Mayor Adams, and
25 Chancellor Melissa Aviles-Ramos to take immediate

1 actions to support and protect immigrant young people
2 like me in our city.

3
4 I came to this country about two years ago in
5 search of more opportunities and a better education
6 and safety. It was very scary to be alone in this new
7 country with just my grandmother. With all these
8 things and these change going on, my teachers help me
9 orient into a new school and new language.

10 The one thing I can't adjust to is the amount of
11 the school police always present. It makes students
12 feel like we did something wrong.

13 Every afternoon, the school cops get loud and
14 aggressive, urging us to immediately leave to school
15 property.

16 Since arriving, I've seen Mayor Adams increase
17 local and state police presence through the city.
18 Racism is at the core of the United States system of
19 policing, incarceration, and immigration.

20 All of the enforcement systems use discrimination
21 and violent tactics to criminalize Black, brown,
22 Latin, and immigrant people. Just yesterday, Governor
23 Hochul said in her State of the State Address that
24 even more police will be added to train stations.

1
2 Seeing state troopers makes me feel like war is
3 going to happen at any point. This summer, a state
4 trooper at the train yelled at me because I was
5 passing a coffee to my friend through the metal gate.

6 It is terrifying to be surrounded by so many
7 cops, because I know any interaction is more likely
8 for us to get pushed into the School to Deportation
9 Pipeline. (TIMER CHIMES)

10 Donald Trump will take office in four days. He
11 has been bragging about launching dozens executive
12 orders to target my community. Mass deportation in
13 and (INAUDIBLE) ICE, sensitive locations (INAUDIBLE)
14 his first day in office.

15 At this moment, City Council must hold the line
16 with our detainer laws, so immigrants are not afraid
17 of interacting with city agencies or schools -so that
18 I'm not afraid to go to school.

19 While the chancellor has sent guidance to school
20 around ICE, she can take steps right now to make the
21 protocols stronger. ICE should not be able to come
22 into schools without a judicial warrant. All school
23 staff should be training to protect students. My data
24 should be protected. There should be signs at the
25

1
2 front entrance of a school saying ICE is not welcome
3 in our schools.

4 The chancellor has the power to make all of these
5 protocols into regulations. Protecting young people
6 from ICE is not just red tape procedure. It is the
7 job of New York City Public Schools.

8 Every student deserves to feel safe in schools,
9 regardless of their immigration status. And let it be
10 clear, when my friends I talk about what safe schools
11 look like, it never includes more school cops. We
12 want more mental health support and restorative
13 justice. We want New York City to invest in us, not
14 school cops. Police and ICE are not welcome in our
15 schools.

16 Mayor Adams, City Council, Chancellor Aviles-
17 Ramos, you need to step up and do everything in in
18 your power to protect the rights of all New Yorkers,
19 especially young people.

20 I don't want to wonder if it's safe to finish my
21 senior year, because I came here with the idea in how
22 to feel safe and have a better future. I want to be
23 able to walk into my school knowing that my school
24 has my back. I want to continue planning for my
25

1
2 school dreams and planning for my future career in
3 psychology.

4 Protect me, protect young people, and protect all
5 immigrants. Thank you so much.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Dhaliem, we don't normally
7 clap in the Chamber, we do this (SILENT APPLAUSE
8 GESTURE). And I just really was going to break that
9 law, just like, yeah clap like crazy. Thank you for
10 your testimony. You certainly did not need an
11 interpreter; you speak English incredibly well.

12 I agree with you around the sentiments of the
13 students - that in fact what we see is the most
14 successful schools are the schools that have the most
15 recourses, not the most cops. And it does bring fear.
16 And it feels very tone deaf to our communities that
17 when we are frightened, and we are getting threatened
18 that the immediate instance... the immediate reaction
19 by state and local authorities are to add more police
20 everywhere - with no consideration for actually how
21 some people feel about that.

22 So, thank you for your testimony. We stand in
23 solidarity with you. We stand to protect our
24 communities in every way possible. But your
25

1 leadership in this city is super important, and thank
2 you for being here and for your testimony.

3
4 DHALIEM ALBAN: Thank you for listening to me.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: certainly second what the
7 chair said. One minute - You're like a rock star.
8 Just wanted to know. So, you're more important than
9 celebrities.

10 But I just want to ask, do you get a sense that
11 at your school there is training on what to do if ICE
12 is there, police... and then what kind of training do
13 the teachers or the students get along these lines,
14 if any?

15 DHALIEM ALBAN: We don't have any training yet
16 because so many people increase their police in our
17 schools. So we don't feel that safety. But we do have
18 teachers that are informed and teach us little things
19 to, like, make ourselves safe.

20 If I can explain in English in Spanish... I'm
21 sorry.

22 (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

23 UNKNOWN: And a lot of teachers are showing us
24 restorative justice practices.

1
2 TRANSLATOR: There are many programs that like
3 Made the Road that they are teaching us these things
4 like how to protect us incase of police officer will
5 come to us and try to interrogate us for example.
6 They teach us what to do and how to act, so that they
7 will not do basically like a false arrest, or they
8 will try to do something wrong in those cases.

9 And we believe that we feel bad, not only me, but
10 all my classmates when all those police officers are
11 supervising us 24 hours a day. Especially because our
12 school community and my own school, they're mostly
13 immigrants. That's the thing.

14 And Donald Trump will have the pleasure to
15 separate families, to see this family separation. He
16 wanted to see those separations.

17 We're making a great effort to share in the
18 community and to be to be bilingual, completely
19 bilingual, to, you know, to interact with others and
20 to be part of the community.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you, rock star.

22 DHALIEM ALBAN: (LAUGHS) Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Hear! Hear! Thank you. Thank
24 you to this panel.

1
2 Now I officially open the hearing to public
3 testimony. I remind members of the public that this
4 is a formal government proceeding and that decorum
5 shall be observed at all times. As such, members of
6 the public shall remain silent at all times.

7 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
8 to testify. No video recording or photography is
9 allowed from the witness table.

10 Further, members of the public may not present
11 audio or video recordings as testimony, but may
12 submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant
13 at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

14 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
15 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms
16 and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
17 have two minutes to speak on today's oversight
18 hearing topic: Protection for Immigrant Communities,
19 or the Preconsidered Resolutions pertaining to New
20 York for all Act and the Access to Representation
21 Act.

22 If you have a written statement or additional
23 written testimony you wish to submit for the record,
24 please provide a copy of that testimony to the
25 Sergeant at Arms.

1
2 You may also email written testimony to
3 Testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours after the
4 close of this hearing. Audio and video recordings
5 will not be accepted.

6 The following languages are available for
7 interpretation for in person hearing attendees and
8 for those following along on the Council's website:
9 Spanish, Haitian Creole, Arabic, French, and Bangla.

10 The following languages are also available for
11 interpretation for in person hearing attendees:
12 Mandarin, Pulaar, and Wolof.

13 For in person panelists, please come to the table
14 once your name has been called.

15 And now I will call the first official public
16 panel: Abou Cissé, apologies, Abou, if I have
17 mispronounced your name; Garfield Green; Kelvin
18 Servita Arocha; and Ximena Bustamente.

19 (PAUSE)

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay, Garfield Green?

21 We will start with you, Ximena.

22 XIMENA BUSTAMENTE: Hello, hi, everyone, my name
23 is Ximena Bustamente, and I am with the Undocumented
24 Women's Fund. We are a grassroots feminist
25 organization that for the past two years have been

1
2 working hand in hand with recent arrivals, building a
3 care network in the face of the neglect, the
4 scapegoating, and the profiting from our newest
5 neighbors that has characterized the Adams'
6 Administration in our eyes.

7 This organizing and caring for our newest
8 neighbors, our comadres, as we call them, has allowed
9 us to see how deeply flawed the parallel shelter
10 system is, how there is a lack of services and lack
11 of protections for its residents.

12 And this is a topic that I want to address today.

13 Our comadres and us are very concerned about the
14 lack of protections for the residents of the shelter
15 - the violent shelter system.

16 We know that this can be a special area of
17 enforcement or that is especially vulnerable to
18 enforcement since it only shelters new arrivals.

19 And we want to demand the Administration to
20 clarify what are the protections in this parallel
21 shelter system.

22 Both protections for physical raids, ICE coming
23 and doing physical raids, but also what we call paper
24 raids. What are the protections of the data of the
25 residents? And we want to know what is the training

1
2 that the staff is receiving, what are the directives
3 that they are receiving, and what are the
4 accountability mechanisms if they violate those
5 directives?

6 So far as, Alexa Avilés, Council Member Avilés,
7 uhm, mentioned earlier, what we have been seeing is
8 that not only have they not been trained, but they
9 have actually been spreading misinformation and fear
10 among shelter residents.

11 And we also want to know what are the protections
12 concerning data? (TIMER CHIMES) We believe that this
13 is a especially sensitive matter. And as we know,
14 there has been a very cruel policy of shelter
15 evictions. And every time that a family, or just a
16 single adult, gets evicted and relocated, there's a
17 paper trail that is created. And we want to know what
18 are the protections for all the data?

19 Earlier in the hearing, we... there was a topic
20 of or the case of Jennifer, and we believe that this
21 is an example of how sensitive this data is.

22 I think that it was Council Member Hanif that
23 mentioned that Jennifer was a resident in a parallel
24 shelter that, uh, requested mental health support for
25 her children, for the trauma they have endured coming

1
2 to the United States. And then the shelter opened a
3 case with ACS, and ACS informed ICE, and she was
4 detained at her next check-in.

5 When Council Member Hanif addressed this case,
6 she just didn't mention that, you know, it was the
7 shelter that actually opened the case with ACS.

8 So this is only to highlight how sensitive data
9 is, and it's not only the collaboration between, you
10 know, like the shelter staff with ICE, but also with
11 other agencies from the city.

12 So finally, just to close, we demand that the
13 Administration fulfills its role of guaranteeing
14 permanent housing for all New Yorkers regardless of
15 immigration status, dignified living conditions, and
16 it secures New York's status not only as a sanitary
17 city, but as a fearless city. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

19 KELVIN SERVITA AROCHA (via Rosa Cohen-Cruz):

20 Hi, my name is Rosa Cohen-Cruz; I'm an attorney
21 with The Bronx Defenders Reading on behalf of Kelvin
22 Sarita Arrocha.

23 "My name is Kelvin. I'm not here in person today
24 because I'm still in ICE attention because of NYPD
25 collaboration with ICE. While you sit here in liberty

1
2 right now, remember that I am here in spirit but
3 still in a cage.

4 In January of 2024, my life was turned upside
5 down. The NYPD claimed I was part of a violent attack
6 on officers in Times Square. They branded me a gang
7 member and a fugitive, and they implied that because
8 of laws designed to protect immigrants like me from
9 abuse, they were unable to stop us from doing
10 something dangerous.

11 All these claims were lies.

12 I never left New York. I was here the whole time
13 waiting for my court date. I was never part of a
14 gang, and it was the NYPD who initiated the violence
15 that day as video evidence later revealed. I never
16 assaulted a police officer, and that charge was
17 dropped.

18 I plead guilty to a misdemeanor for kicking a
19 police radio after witnessing officers brutally
20 attack my friends. But now that the dust has settled,
21 you don't hear about any of this or the further
22 violations to me and my family.

23 The injustice started the night I was arrested by
24 ICE. On a cold and snowy February night, NYPD and ICE
25 officers stormed into my apartment together, guns

1 drawn, shouting. I was barefoot half asleep and
2 terrified. They ignored my cries... my pleas not to
3 scare the children and for shoes, dragged me into the
4 freezing snow and told me I was being deported.
5

6 For days, my family was trapped inside the
7 apartment by NYPD officers guarding outside. They
8 couldn't leave even for food. Children went hungry.

9 Why was ICE there?

10 The NYPD says the law prevents them from working
11 with ICE, but not that day, not when they wanted to
12 make an example out of me.

13 After my arrest, they threw me into an
14 immigration jail in Orange County. It was like being
15 buried alive. I couldn't shower, drink water, or even
16 make a phone call. I never saw an immigration judge,
17 never had a chance to ask for bond.

18 Then they sent me to Rikers Island to wait for my
19 criminal case. Even if I posted bail, I wouldn't have
20 been released because I was there as a borrowed
21 prisoner from ICE.

22 (TIMER CHIMES) It's terrifying to realize how
23 vulnerable we are as recent arrived New Yorkers. The
24 laws that are supposed to protect us are barely
25

1 holding on. The NYPD violates them anyway without any
2 consequences to them.
3

4 This isn't about letting anyone get away with
5 anything. I care about living in a safe city, but it
6 cannot come at the expense of our rights and
7 separating families based on lies and broken laws.

8 Do you know the governor went on TV and said
9 people like me should be locked up? She didn't care
10 about the truth, only about looking tough.

11 The NYPD didn't care about my rights, only
12 protecting their pride. And when the facts came to
13 light, none of them were forced by the media to
14 answer for them, including why the NYPD and ICE
15 worked together in violation of the law.

16 Immigrants shouldn't be afraid to interact with
17 the government, and the government shouldn't make New
18 Yorkers afraid of each other either. And when they do
19 so based on lies or ignoring the law, there should be
20 accountability.

21 That's why I support Intro 214 that would give
22 people like me the power to sue when the NYPD and
23 other agencies break the law and Resolution 2970 in
24 support of the New York For All Act.
25

1
2 If the police and other city agencies have
3 nothing to hide, they shouldn't fear any scrutiny.

4 We all deserve to be treated with dignity and
5 respect no matter how long we've been here. That's
6 the New York I believe in, and I believe most New
7 Yorkers want that too."

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Rosa, for
9 highlighting another instance where they are breaking
10 the law - and clearly there seems to be no
11 accountability - and why the rhetoric and the
12 misinformation is so damaging. So, I thank, Kelvin,
13 right? For sharing his story and his advocacy.

14 I know you are with the Bronx Defenders. Just
15 really quickly, could you tell us, in your
16 experience, certainly how you have been seeing this
17 relationship, and, if at all, in addition to 214,
18 other recommendations that you could provide?

19 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Yes, thank you.

20 I do have testimony that I was gonna to provide
21 later. So I'm happy to save it if you prefer, but I
22 can also answer the question now.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Let's get back to your
24 testimony (INAUDIBLE)...

25 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Okay, thank you...

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So you can have a full
3 moment, thank you.

4 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Thank you, I appreciate that.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Next we have Garfield?

6 GARFIELD GREEN: Hi, good afternoon, Council And
7 Member, and members of the community.

8 Unfortunately, I've been having, like, the worst
9 couple of years. I was detained. I came home to a son
10 that was born while I was detained. I still find
11 myself trying not to lie to him. He's actually here
12 with me today. He just asked me a couple minutes ago.
13 I don't know how he figured it out, he's just seven,
14 if they're gonna take me away.

15 I consider myself a strong person. Ever since I
16 came to this country - I come with a disability - I
17 pride myself walking around the city, showing my
18 daughter projects that I built, including the World
19 Trade Center. I've been there since September 17 of
20 that year until we put up the memorial.

21 I did something wrong, and I went away to pay my
22 time. For some reason, every time I heard the word
23 ICE, it's like I've always been scared of cancer, so
24 I never go down to get treatment or to test myself.
25 But I think I just found out what I'm scared of more

1 than anything else in this world. It's not cancer.
2 It's get ripped away from my family.

3 They let me out of detention because I came up
4 with a kind of blood clot that I have, like, multiple
5 back to back to back. They told me he was gonna take
6 my next leg. I told him I'd rather die in the
7 hospital. I wouldn't give him the right to take it.
8 It got so bad (TIMER CHIMES) when the hospital
9 released me, the surgeon called them and tell them
10 there's no way I'm gonna make it. That very night I
11 came back to the facility, one of the immigration
12 officer saw me and he made a phone call. And in 20
13 minutes, I was released.

14 Now I have immigration next month. I don't know
15 what I'm going there to do or what I'm going say. But
16 I know I would rather have cancer 20 times wanting to
17 go to that place, but I have to go.

18 What I'm gonna tell my kids, I have no clue. I
19 don't know what in life you could do to be punished
20 over and over, but I guess this is a meaning to
21 custody immigration.

22 I know there's a lot of beautiful people in this
23 country, and I can't understand why no one can see
24 how bad they are. I've been in immigration custody so
25

1 bad that I was clothesless, sleeping on the floor for
2 almost three months. Even though the doctor told them
3 they have to give me certain medication, I never got
4 it, and that contributed to the blood clot.

5 I did a couple of surgeries since I got home, and
6 they moved some of them. I'm actually do easily in a
7 wheelchair. I'm supposed to still be, but my son
8 don't like it. So I promise him if he comes with me
9 today, I won't use a wheelchair. But now he's
10 sleeping.

11 I can relate to a lot of things, and I can't
12 believe, I still can't believe I've been home almost
13 two years. Like, there's so much people who carer.
14 Because once you're behind those walls, it's just you
15 and the people who hate you. And the crazy part is
16 the one that hates you is the one that have the power
17 to take everything away.

18 I've never imagined this country have so much
19 hate or agree with an agency to have their own laws
20 because everything they do is against the law. It's
21 not what we believe in. This is the bad side of this
22 country. If we could get rid of that, we all could
23 get along and make this place way better. We're not
24 what they're saying we are. Thank you, guys.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Mr. Green, thank you for
3 sharing your story. I wish... I know you have been
4 here since this morning, very early, standing with
5 us. I wish your son were awake to tell him he should
6 be very proud of his father, who is very brave and
7 pushing through enormous adversity - and standing
8 collectively with community to say, all people should
9 be dignified. We must do better.

10 Unfortunately, this country has a very long
11 history of hatred and was built on that. But we are
12 working very diligently to change it because there
13 are enough resources for all. We can change that
14 paradigm, but, unfortunately, it is going to take a
15 lot of work given the incoming administration and
16 their hateful rhetoric. But I would like to talk to
17 you more offline.

18 And all I am thinking about right now is
19 *Fortaleza* which is "strength". I wish you much
20 strength, and I hope we can connect you to some kind
21 of resources that can support you. Thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 GARFIELD GREEN: I appreciate it.

24 ABOU CISSÉ (via interpreter): Hello, my name is
25 Abou Cissé, I'm from Mauritania in West Africa. In my

1
2 country, there is discrimination, famine, Jihadism,
3 and insecurity. I came to the United States in 2023
4 seeking a better life and seeking to stay alive.

5 With the election of this new president, we, the
6 community of migrants seeking asylum, are very
7 concerned. We've received information saying that our
8 work permits might be canceled and that our demands,
9 our applications for asylum will not be accepted, and
10 we might be sent back to our countries of origin,
11 that we have fled fleeing injustice, discrimination,
12 our or for reasons of our ethnic group, our religion,
13 or our sexual orientation.

14 If I go back to my country, my country of origin,
15 which is Mauritania, I might be tortured, even
16 tortured to death. And I think that many people who
17 are here today are in the same situation that I am
18 in.

19 I'm very traumatized by the fact that I might
20 have to return to my country if I am stopped by the
21 immigration police. I am not a criminal. I fight
22 injustice and racial discrimination, and I do this
23 wherever it might be. That is the reason that I found
24 myself coming to the United States.

1
2 The United States is a country that respects
3 human rights, and it does protect its population. So
4 I would like to ask elected officials and the
5 government of the United States (TIMER CHIMES) to
6 give us the chance to keep our work permits, to get
7 work permits, to become legal here so that we don't
8 become a burden to the government of the United
9 States.

10 We are not criminals. We are not part of... we
11 are not members of gangs. We are not delinquents. We
12 want to work here. We want to be safe, and we want to
13 take charge of our lives. We want to take
14 responsibility, have a life, participate in the
15 flourishing of our lives, and also in the flourishing
16 of the United States, the country that we love.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Mr. Cissé, thank
18 you for your testimony. And I should add for the
19 record, and I think we all in this room know that
20 undocumented immigrants pay more of their income in
21 state and local taxes than the top 1% of tax payors.
22 There has never been a drain. It has been an economic
23 boost in every city where immigrants have come to.
24 And that is certainly the case here. So, thank you,
25

1
2 and we will be fighting together for that
3 opportunity. Thank you.

4 For the next panel we have Miral Abbas, Kulsoom
5 Tapal, Justin Srey, Airenakhue Omoragbon, Aracelis
6 Lucero, and Cresenciana Morales.

7 (PAUSE)

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I think everyone is...
9 Amazing, would you like to start?

10 MIRAL ABBAS: Good afternoon, my name is Miral
11 Abbas, and I'm the Health Partnerships Coordinator at
12 Coalition for Asian American Children and Families or
13 CACF. I'm here today to discuss our Access Health New
14 York City initiative and urge the Council to include
15 \$4 million for our initiative in the coming year
16 budget. With this addition, Access Health can uplift
17 and fund new community organizations to meet the
18 growing needs of our diverse immigrant communities.

19 I'd like to start by thanking committee chair,
20 Chair Alexa Avilés, and members of the Immigration
21 Committee for their extraordinary commitment.

22 Access Health NYC is a citywide initiative that
23 supports 37 community based organizations across all
24 five boroughs of our city.

1
2 Access Health is led by four key agencies, one of
3 which is CACF, and CACF is the nation's only Pan
4 Asian children and families advocacy organization
5 with a mission to advocate for equity and opportunity
6 for marginalized AAPI children and families.

7 For context, more than three quarters of our
8 access health organizations conduct benefits
9 navigations, community health education, and
10 referrals to social services such as SNAP or health
11 care and health outreach to asylum seekers in our
12 city.

13 Recently, our organizations were critical to the
14 City's response in the COVID-19 pandemic at a time
15 when Access Health received no increases in funding.
16 Almost all of our organizations report expending more
17 resources than they have received. They are vastly
18 underfunded for the important work that they do.

19 Over the years, Access Health has built the
20 capacity of its awardees to provide critical services
21 through local trusted community members and
22 culturally responsive and accessible avenues. Some
23 examples include distributing health information at
24 halal food pantries during Islamic months to
25 communicating in languages and challenging

1
2 misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines through ethnic
3 social media outlets such as WhatsApp.

4 Some more innovative methods include consulates,
5 which are convenient locations to reach new migrants,
6 local barbershops and nail and hair salons where our
7 awardees send community health workers to visit
8 immigrants and to educate salonists who have notable
9 close relationships with the immigrants, (TIMER
10 CHIMES) and then, of course, our community health
11 workers who we know conduct linguistically accessible
12 and culturally responsive health outreach.

13 Our awardees built trust and community
14 understanding, allows them to easily translate and
15 transmit pertinent information about health benefits
16 and policies and health enrollment to immigrant
17 populations who we know face cultural and linguistic
18 barriers and legal fears due to their immigration
19 status.

20 Our awardees play a critical role by working at
21 the forefront to address fears, dispel myths and
22 disinformation, and provide clarity on important
23 policies and health care and methods that are easily
24 understood given that immigrants are often unreached
25 by mainstream city agencies and media. This work will

1
2 ever be more important in light of potential
3 political changes that are coming to immigrant health
4 and legal benefits.

5 Therefore, we ask the Committee on Immigration to
6 consider supporting our Access Health Initiative and
7 in partnership with the Committee on Health, consider
8 an expansion for necessary funding to \$4 million
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

11 JUSTIN SREY: Thank you to the New York Council
12 for the opportunity to testify today. My name is
13 Justin Srey, and I'm the Southeast Asian Defense
14 Coordinator for Mekong NYC.

15 Mekong NYC is a social justice organization
16 dedicated to uplifting the Southeast Asian community
17 in the Bronx and across New York. Our community is
18 made of Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees who first
19 arrived here in the 1980s as part of the largest
20 refugee resettlement program in this country's
21 history.

22 This migration was fueled by war, genocide, and
23 mass carpet bombing in Southeast Asia due to what
24 many of us know as the Vietnam War. Once in the U.S.,
25 the resettlement process here was far from easy. Our

1
2 community faced ongoing struggles from survival in
3 neglected areas like the Bronx and Brooklyn where
4 tens of thousands of our community members resettled.
5 They dealt with systematic poverty, over policing,
6 lack of access to living wage jobs, overreliance on
7 government benefits, underfunded schools, and high
8 rates of mental health issues.

9 Contrary to what some believe, migration is a
10 Asian American Pacific Islander issue. For the past
11 20 years, the Southeast Asian community has faced a
12 deportation crisis. Across the U.S., including here
13 in New York, almost 20,000 Southeast Asian refugees
14 face the threat of deportation due to past criminal
15 convictions, even though some already have served
16 their time, rebuilt their lives, and have no
17 connection to Southeast Asia.

18 During the First Trump administration,
19 deportations within the Cambodian community surged by
20 279% from 2017 to 2018. Given this history, we fear
21 that Trump 2.0 will accelerate this trend with Trump
22 carrying out deportations even more aggressively
23 starting January 20th.

24 In addition to separating families, deportation
25 will also lead to many harmful effects. Many of our

1
2 community members already live on the margins of
3 society. The thought of deportation will push them
4 further into the services, programs, and institutions
5 they rely on. This includes schools, hospitals,
6 housing courts, and Social Security's offices.

7 Fear of interacting with the government will
8 deepen a family's economic instability, (TIMER
9 CHIMES) threaten their housing status, harm the
10 education and well-being of children, and trigger
11 preexisting trauma related to war, violence, and
12 displacement of our community.

13 This lack of trust and fear of government
14 agencies creates an atmosphere of anxiety that
15 undermines our community's ability to heal and
16 thrive.

17 We urge the City Council to take decisive action
18 and do the following:

19 One, ensure that New York City remains a
20 sanctuary state. Specifically, we urge you to pass
21 Intro 214 which allow immigrant New Yorkers harmed by
22 violations of detainer laws to seek justice.

23 Second, invest in long term safety and well-being
24 of immigrant and refugee communities by supporting
25

1
2 The 18% and Growing Initiative which advocates for
3 increased funding to AAPI organizations.

4 Third, supporting the Access Health NYC
5 Initiative which invests in community based
6 organizations such as Mekong NYC, and expanding
7 language justice to reach communities like ours.

8 In closing, I urge this committee to not only
9 protect our community from deportation, but also
10 ensure that our communities are supported with the
11 resources and opportunities to thrive. Our work is
12 far from done, and we need your leadership now more
13 than ever. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

15 ARACELIS LUCERO: Good afternoon.

16 Thank you to the Committee on Immigration for
17 holding this hearing and to Chair Avilés for always
18 having our back. We really appreciate it.

19 My name is Aracelis Lucero, I'm the Executive
20 Director of Masa, a community based organization in
21 South Bronx who over for the last two decades has
22 been working towards strengthening literacy,
23 leadership, and power for immigrants and indigenous
24 people living in New York City.

1
2 I think I'm preaching to the choir here, so I'm
3 going to skip a couple of sentences here.

4 For decades, we have fought for dignity, respect,
5 and protection of our rights so that just like many
6 other generations of immigrants who have come to the
7 United States for safety and better opportunities,
8 our communities can integrate successfully and thrive
9 joyously in what we now call our home.

10 During the last Trump administration, we
11 witnessed firsthand how his immigration policies and
12 immigration enforcement tore families and our
13 community apart. We witnessed how fear paralyzed
14 adults and children alike, their fear so great they
15 didn't get to work, or children didn't want to go to
16 school, fearing it would be the last time they'd see
17 their parents at drop off.

18 We witnessed dozens of our families pack up and
19 leave because the anxiousness was too much for their
20 family to bear, and the thought of being detained in
21 inhumane conditions was not a risk they were willing
22 to take.

23 We witnessed families going completely
24 underground and unenroll from public benefits for the
25 even for their U.S. citizen children who were

1
2 entitled to those benefits, and we witnessed an
3 unwillingness to come forward to report crimes and to
4 report when their rights were being violated.

5 We are doing our part by offering Know Your
6 Rights trainings, emergency planning workshops and
7 clinics, individual consultations, and immigration
8 application assistance with the support of our PSBP
9 project partners and Co-Counsel NYC and printing
10 hundreds of posters and KYR material to ensure our
11 communities are prepared, can share what they have
12 learned with their loved ones, and aren't paralyzed
13 by fear.

14 We are now asking for you to do your part, and we
15 urge this council to act swiftly and strategically to
16 reassure and protect immigrant New Yorkers.

17 As such, we recommend this council to, (TIMER
18 CHIMES) one, ensure current local laws to protect
19 immigrants are being followed and that all agencies
20 and staff are properly trained, as well as to pass
21 Intro 214 to continue to support New York for all.

22 We particularly call on ensuring the safety of
23 immigrant families in all special locations, but
24 especially call on the New York City Department of
25 Education to ensure the safety of children and their

1
2 families by providing support services to immigrants
3 and impacted families.

4 We would like the City to provide adequate
5 funding to legal service agencies and grassroots
6 community based organizations and groups to meet the
7 demand of deportation defense, Know Your Rights
8 trainings, emergency planning, and social service for
9 immigrants.

10 We call on the restoration and expanded funding
11 for the Rapid Response Legal Network and NYFA, and we
12 urge the city council to continue to support
13 innovative community solutions, such as the Pro Se
14 Plus Project and the language access funding to
15 support the full implementation of the language bank
16 and the language worker owned cooperatives.

17 And we certainly hope that our worker co-op
18 members one day will get to translate here and
19 interpret at the city council.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much for your
21 incredible work.

22 CRESENCIANA MORALES: Good afternoon, my name is
23 Cresenciana Morales, and I'm a community advocate at
24 Mixteca.

1
2 Since the results of the recent presidential
3 election, our community has been on high alert. Many
4 of our community members have been asking questions
5 about whether New York City will be complicit with
6 federal authorities and whether it's safe to share
7 their information for resources like New York City
8 Care, Fair Fares, and ID New York City, all New York
9 City benefits that benefit many low income immigrant
10 households.

11 We have seen an increase in community members
12 concerned about their families, jobs, and overall
13 stability. Over the past weeks, we've surveyed over
14 200 community members and collected data on the
15 community's top concerns.

16 Some of the concerns were potential interactions
17 with ICE, lack of representation in immigration
18 courts, and cooperation with ICE and state agencies.

19 Seventy percent of our community members surveyed
20 expressed that they will face an immigration related
21 issue in the future due to the change in
22 administration.

23 Additionally, we've also seen an increase in
24 community members asking about resources to help
25 families prepare for deportation. In the in the month

1
2 of November alone, we had several members inquire
3 about custody issues and how to protect their
4 children in the event of deportation.

5 After the rumors of possible ICE raids in the
6 capital region upstate, the number of immigrant
7 related questions at Mixteca has increased in the
8 past weeks. Every day, we receive several calls
9 asking questions like, "What are my rights in New
10 York City?" "What do I do if ICE agents show up at my
11 workplace?" "How do I prepare a letter to give
12 guardianship of my children to another family member
13 if I'm detained in a raid?"

14 It is unfair that our community has been targeted
15 for years with xenophobic comments about how they
16 don't belong here. There was a time when we were
17 proud of the protection that New York City provided
18 to its immigrant community. In recent weeks; however,
19 we've become concerned that these protections will
20 disappear and that our immigrant communities will be
21 at greater risk.

22 Children should not be afraid to go to school and
23 not see their parents after. Our community should not
24 be afraid to do daily activities for fear of being
25 taken away by ICE agents.

1
2 At Mixteca, we try to reassure community members
3 of their rights, and that hospital, schools, and
4 nonprofits organizations will not reveal the
5 immigration status if asked by federal authorities.

6 However, we cannot do this alone and have asked
7 New York City to maintain its... (TIMER CHIMES) that
8 it will remain a Sanctuary City .

9 This is why we are also here to advocate for
10 campaigns like New York for all and access to
11 representation act to provide coverage for immigrant
12 families and to support funding for immigrant
13 services for all immigrants.

14 We are not only asking that New York City remain
15 a Sanctuary City, but that New York State becomes a
16 sanctuary state, because all New Yorkers deserve to
17 be loved, to be safe, and to have the rights upheld.

18 Thank you all for your attention.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Mixteca is always
20 in the house representing. I appreciate you. I love
21 everyone. Next?

22 KULSOOM TAPAL: Good afternoon, my name is Kulsoom
23 Tapal, and I'm the Education Policy Coordinator at
24 the Coalition for Asian American Children and
25 Families.

1
2 Amid rising antiimmigrant sentiment, it's crucial
3 for MOIA and other city agencies to strengthen
4 protections and ensure immigrants can safely access
5 services and seek justice.

6 While local while local laws limiting city
7 agencies' cooperation with federal immigration
8 enforcement are vital, weak enforcement and
9 accountability leaves immigrants, especially AAPI
10 individuals, facing language barriers and limited
11 legal access vulnerable to rights violations,
12 unwarranted detainment, and even deportation.

13 To prepare for these challenges, CACF urges the
14 council to one, pass Intro 214 and ensure
15 accountability for city agencies that collaborate
16 with federal immigration enforcement and engage in
17 rights violations that lead to unlawful detention and
18 deportation.

19 Two, require city agencies to publicly report any
20 instances of cooperation the federal immigration
21 enforcement and detail steps taken to rectify
22 violations.

23 Three, empower MOIA to investigate and address
24 violations of Sanctuary City laws.

1
2 Four, reinforce existing Sanctuary City laws by
3 explicitly prohibiting the use of City resources to
4 facilitate federal immigration enforcement and
5 expanding protections to cover the gaps in current
6 legislation.

7 Five, allocate additional resources to provide
8 free or low cost legal services, mental health
9 support, and other essential services to our
10 immigrant communities.

11 Six, invest in public education campaigns to
12 inform immigrant New Yorkers of their rights under
13 Sanctuary City legislation and how to report
14 violations.

15 And seven, develop a citywide emergency response
16 plan to address potential escalations in the current
17 landscape.

18 Additionally, we also request that MOIA should
19 lead efforts to address mischaracterizations of
20 Sanctuary City policies, and agencies at large should
21 collaborate with trusted community based
22 organizations such as Coalition for Asian American
23 Children and Families, CACF, (TIMER CHIMES) to
24 properly serve immigrant communities, amplify
25

1
2 accurate information about Sanctuary City
3 protections, and combat harmful stereotypes.

4 All of this must be done with language access in
5 mind. Our organization has a community review of
6 translations and there's many other resources
7 available that should be utilized to support this
8 effort.

9 Now more than ever, it's imperative that we
10 dedicate our efforts together to protect immigrant
11 communities. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, I was... I was
13 also hoping to hear about an emergency - a citywide
14 emergency response plan, and we did not hear that.
15 But that does that mean we are not going to fight
16 about it. I will guarantee you that. Thank you so
17 much for your testimony.

18 Next, and please say your name for the record.

19 AIRENAKHUE B. OMORAGBON: All right, so, good
20 afternoon everyone, and thank you, Council Member
21 Avilés, and the Committee on Immigration for holding
22 today's hearing.

23 My name is Airenakhue B. Omoragbon, and I am the
24 proud daughter of immigrants from Trinidad and
25 Nigeria. I am also the New York Policy Manager at

1
2 African Communities Together, we are located on 127th
3 Street up in Harlem.

4 I'm testifying today to urge the city council to
5 act swiftly and do all that is in your power to
6 protect the safety, uh, of immigrant communities
7 living in New York.

8 Since launching as an organization, ACT has been
9 at the front lines of supporting arriving migrants
10 with immigration legal services, navigating New York
11 social service agencies, and advocating for quality
12 housing placements.

13 In response to the 200,000 plus new arrivals and
14 asylum seekers who've arrived in the city since 2022,
15 ACT has challenged the city to provide Muslim prayer
16 spaces, language interpretation, and other culturally
17 sensitive services to Africans living in the city
18 shelter.

19 We have also led seven policy campaigns aimed at
20 getting new temporary protective status designations
21 and work permits for Africans coming from countries
22 in conflict.

23 We are fully aware of the hardship that is to
24 come in the next administration. When you look at our
25 membership, you'll see that we have 60 to 65% of our

1
2 members are women, two-thirds of our members of our
3 New York chapter are Muslim, and the majority of our
4 members are low income and living below the federal
5 poverty line.

6 Our members also hail from countries like
7 Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Ethiopia, just to
8 name a few, and all... of a lot of our members were
9 forced to leave their home countries because of
10 extremist groups, ethnic tensions, sexual and gender
11 based violence against women and girls, and being
12 subjected to arbitrary arrests and physical assault
13 for being members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

14 You know, during the first Trump Administration,
15 (TIMER CHIMES) we experienced a lot. ICE detained
16 many of our Africans in subway stations, at their
17 homes, workplaces, and immigration appointments, and
18 many of our members were detained with little to no
19 access to legal services and interpreters who can
20 speak languages like Wolof, Mandingo, and Pulaar.

21 For New York's African community, delayed asylum
22 applications, Muslim bans, and other things like that
23 are simply... are not simply, unfortunate
24 circumstances. These decisions are a matter of life
25 and death for our community.

1
2 When ACT heard President Trump and Mayor Adams
3 and border czar Tom Homens, their intimidations, we
4 took that seriously, and we are planning, to act
5 accordingly. So we're asking the New York City
6 Council to come with the same type of energy and meet
7 these threats of ICE collusion and deportation with
8 oversight, enforcement, and innovation.

9 I think a lot of the people on this panel talked
10 about the policy, uh, recommendations that we have,
11 but I just want to highlight once again, we need you
12 all to pass Intro 214. We need you all to advocate
13 for the passage of historic funding package for
14 immigration legal services. We also need you all to
15 secure compliance with Local Law 228, which would
16 prohibit the use of City resources for immigration
17 enforcement. And we need you all to pass all of the
18 resolutions that were mentioned today by Council
19 Member Hanif, Council Member Hudson, Chair Avilés
20 introduced... the ones that you all introduced
21 calling for the passage of New York for All Act and
22 Access to Representation Act.

23 All of these things would prohibit the disclosure
24 of immigration status by New York State entities and
25

1
2 establish the right to legal counsel in immigration
3 court proceedings.

4 I'll finish here in saying that, you know, if
5 anyone was at that rally this morning, you heard
6 migrants, you heard advocates, you heard immigrants,
7 and asylum seekers chanting a series of things, but
8 the one that stood in my ear was, "When immigrants
9 are under attack, we stand up and fight back."

10 The people have spoken, and it's time for City
11 Council to get in formation. We look forward to
12 continuing to be in partnership with you all in this
13 matter. Thank you, everyone.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, challenge
15 accepted.

16 (LAUGHTER)

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: We are going to take a very
18 brief pause. I have some personal matters to attend
19 to, and I will be back incredibly shortly with the
20 next panel. Thank you for your grace.

21 (PAUSE)

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Please, folks, find your seats,
23 and we are going to go back in a minute, please be
24 ready to resume.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So we will resume, thank you
3 for the quick pause. I think everybody needed it.

4 So, I have to do a quick reminder about the
5 following languages that are available for
6 interpretation for in person hearing attendees and
7 for those following along on the Council website:
8 Spanish, Haitian Creole, Arabic, French, and Bangla.

9 The following languages are also available for
10 interpretation for the in person hearing attendees:
11 in Mandarin, Pulaar, and Wolof.

12 And for those who are interested in testifying,
13 please sure to see the Sergeant at Arms and fill out
14 a Testimony Appearance Card.

15 Okay, so for our next panel we will have
16 Jennifer, Karla Ostalaza, Ellen Pachnanda, Deborah
17 Lee, and Leidis De La Rosa.

18 Leidis, Deborah, Ellen, Karla, and Jennifer?

19 And I will remind everyone who is providing
20 testimony, it is not my custom to be strict about
21 time, because I feel like you have been patient
22 enough to sit so many hours. So, nevertheless, we do
23 have about 50 people, so just to support one another,
24 if we could try to keep to the time, and I encourage
25 you, obviously, to submit any written testimony that

1
2 is longer and more substantive. And I thank you for
3 that. I am not comfortable with that rule, but it is
4 kind of how we have to coexist in this space.

5 So, I guess we can start here.

6 DEBORAH LEE: Can you hear me? Great. Okay. I'm
7 gonna speak really quickly.

8 My name is Deborah Lee, and I am the Attorney-in-
9 Charge of the Immigration Law Unit at The Legal Aid
10 Society. We thank Chair Avilés and all members for
11 this hearing.

12 As the principal public defender citywide, Legal
13 Aid cannot stress enough the need to reaffirm our
14 Sanctuary City laws. Detainer laws and the Protect
15 Our Courts Act are about upholding due process and
16 accountability and aim to ensure that ICE is held to
17 the probable cause standard required by the
18 constitution before depriving somebody of their
19 liberty.

20 Our state lawmakers must end our state's
21 complicity with ICE by enacting the New York For All
22 Act, which would prohibit local law enforcement
23 across the state from colluding with ICE.

24 Sanctuary City policies rightly disentangle city
25 resources from federal law immigration enforcement.

1
2 Instead of tearing down established protections and
3 feeding more New Yorkers into the ICE deportation
4 pipeline, we must do more to safeguard the rights of
5 our immigrant families, neighbors, and loved ones.

6 Every single human being in this city should be
7 free to call the police when they are in danger or a
8 victim of a crime, go to the hospital if they need
9 medical attention, seek safe shelter from the
10 elements, send their children to school, and
11 participate in a court hearing either as a party,
12 respondent, or witness without the threat of being
13 detained and deported. Our entire community is safer
14 if we provide for this. Undoing New York sanctuary
15 laws will only erode trust with immigrant communities
16 and drive undocumented people further into the
17 shadows.

18 With the promise of mass deportations, it is
19 critical for City Council to robustly fund
20 immigration legal representation for noncitizen New
21 Yorkers. The foremost priority for funding here
22 should be representing noncitizen New Yorkers who are
23 detained and at risk of imminent detention.

24 NYIFUP (New York Immigrant Family Unity Project)
25 providers, you'll hear more from about that, are

1
2 ready to train a new generation of immigration
3 attorneys, but we need a funding commitment from City
4 Council to prepare for the detention of noncitizens
5 and their separation from their families and loved
6 (TIMER CHIMES) ones here in New York City.

7 I'll finish here and submit, written testimony.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Debrah, for all of
10 the work that you do.

11 LEIDIS DE LA ROSA: Good afternoon, Chairwoman and
12 council members, my name is Leidis De La Rosa, and I
13 am the Organizing Coordinator for La Colmena, an
14 immigrant rights organization based on Staten Island.
15 Our mission is to empower the immigrant worker
16 through education, culture, organizing, and economic
17 development.

18 For years, La Colmena has stood unapologetically
19 with our immigrant community, often facing hostility
20 and resistance. Yet, we remain steadfast because we
21 know how critical this work is. We've built a
22 sanctuary of support, resilience, and empowerment,
23 but we cannot do it alone.

24 Today, I am here to remind you of the vital
25 importance of insurance that La Colmena continues to

1
2 receive the unwavering support that it needs from
3 this Council now more than ever.

4 We are already equipping our community members
5 with tools to navigate ICE interactions and preparing
6 for potential mass deportations. But this is just the
7 tip of the iceberg. Our immigrant neighbors face not
8 only the threat of deportation but also wage theft,
9 discrimination, and harassment. We even have to ramp
10 up security at our own facilities, as we face
11 opposition from those who disagree with the work we
12 do.

13 It is not easy to operate under these conditions,
14 but we refuse to back down. Our work is too
15 important, and our community is too valuable.

16 La Colmena exists to remind immigrants on Staten
17 Island that they are not alone. We are here to fight
18 for them, stand with them, and uplift them. But to
19 continue this critical mission, we need your
20 partnership and your commitment. Thank you for your
21 time, your support, and for standing with us as we
22 continue this fight for justice and dignity for all.
23 Together, we can build a stronger, more inclusive
24 Staten Island and a stronger and more inclusive New
25 York.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you to La Colmena for
3 all of the work you are doing. We are with you.

4 ELLEN PACHNANDA: Good afternoon, my name is Ellen
5 Pachnanda, and I'm the Director of the Immigration
6 Practice at Brooklyn Defender Services. Along with my
7 colleagues here today from the Bronx Defenders and
8 Legal Aid Society, we make up New York City's
9 Immigrant Family Unity Project Providers.

10 I thank the Committee on Immigration,
11 particularly Chair Avilés, for inviting us to testify
12 today about how we can continue to collaborate in
13 protecting New York City's immigrant communities.

14 In my time at BDS, I have witnessed firsthand the
15 direct harmful results of the entanglement between
16 the criminal and immigration legal systems.

17 ICE has long relied on local and state law
18 enforcement to target, arrest and deport people,
19 tearing people from their families and their
20 communities.

21 Today, we call on the City Council to strengthen
22 the New York City detainer laws and support pending
23 New York State legislation designed to protect
24 immigrant New Yorkers.
25

1
2 The detainer laws were intended to prevent non
3 citizens detained in DOC and NYPD custody from being
4 transferred to immigration detention. Yet, given
5 ICE's aggressive apprehension detention policies and
6 enforcement priorities, it is evident that our
7 criminal legal system continues to cause noncitizens
8 to be apprehended by ICE.

9 This is especially concerning given the
10 provisions of the Laken Riley Act, now pending before
11 the U.S. Senate, that it would allow for mandatory
12 detention of those merely accused of crimes.

13 Immigrant communities are facing the threat of
14 increased ICE detention, coupled with the threat to
15 go beyond the basis of criminal legal contact to
16 detention near our schools, churches and shelters.

17 The City can and should do more to ensure the
18 residents are not unnecessarily targeted for
19 detention or deportation because of some action or
20 failure to act by the City.

21 In our written testimony, we have
22 recommendations, including, as my colleague
23 mentioned, renewed commitment to defending immigrant
24 New Yorkers by investing in expanding NYIFUP funding.

1
2 We also recommend strongly that New York City
3 strengthen the New York City detainer laws by passing
4 Intro 214. (TIMER CHIMES)

5 Finally, we ask that this council consider
6 calling on the State Legislature to pass the Youth
7 Justice and Opportunities Act, which is Myrie S3426,
8 and again echo the calls to pass the New York for All
9 Act, and finally, to fund Know Your Rights and
10 education for our communities. Thank you for your
11 time.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

13 KARLA OSTALZA: Good afternoon, I am Karla
14 Ostalaza, I am the Managing Director of The
15 Immigration Practice at the Bronx Defenders, and I
16 will be testifying in support of NYIFUP, the first in
17 the nation universal representation program for
18 detained immigrants.

19 Since its creation a decade ago, NYIFUP has
20 provided critical protections for immigrant New
21 Yorkers and their families. NYIFUP social workers,
22 attorneys, and advocates ensure detained immigrants
23 have due process increase their chances of success in
24 deportation cases by an astonishing 1,000% and
25 facilitate the continued connection between those

1
2 inside immigration jails and their family members in
3 the community. NYIFUP also saves New York millions of
4 dollars by reducing foster care costs, preventing
5 employer turnover expenses, and recovering tax
6 revenue that will otherwise be lost to detention and
7 deportation.

8 The work NYIFUP advocates do is complex and
9 lifechanging. Consider Ms. J., a 60-year-old lawful,
10 permanent resident, a mother, who has lived in New
11 York City since her twenties, despite being a
12 survivor of domestic violence and the primary
13 caretaker of a disabled U.S. citizen, Ms. J. was
14 detained by ICE due to an old criminal conviction for
15 which she has never served jail time. Thanks to the
16 NYIFUP team, Ms. J. was released and prevailing her
17 case and also had her conviction overturned. However,
18 she continues to live in fear, because members of
19 her nuclear family remain vulnerable to ICE. Her
20 story highlights the stakes for thousands of New
21 Yorkers in mixed-status families.

22 On Monday, a new federal administration,
23 committed to mass deportations will take office. We
24 expect to see widespread raids and detention by
25 immigration authorities starting next week. During

1
2 Trump's first administration, immigration arrests by
3 ICE increased by 104%. Now with nearly double the
4 detention capacity in the New York City area, the
5 impact will be devastating.

6 NYIFUP (TIMER CHIMES) advocates have the
7 expertise and dedication to take on this fight and
8 recruit and train many others to protect immigrant
9 families. But they will need resources proportional
10 to the magnitude of these attacks. NYIFUP's promise
11 is that no detained immigrant New York will have to
12 fight against family separation deportation alone. We
13 urge the Council to renew its longstanding commitment
14 to this program and ensure we can keep our promise to
15 New Yorkers during their most difficult times. Thank
16 you.

17 JENNIFER V.: Hello, my name is Jennifer, and I am
18 an immigrant from Venezuela. And I arrived in New
19 York last year. But when I came to New York, I came
20 with many dreams to give a better life to my two
21 children. But that dream turned into a nightmare when
22 local agencies violated the law and my rights when
23 they shared my confidential information with ICE.

24 When I was at the shelter, I asked the shelter
25 workers for therapy services for me and my children

1
2 because of the trauma of our trip from Venezuela to
3 the United States was affecting us greatly.

4 Instead of giving us therapy support, the shelter
5 workers called ACS to talk to my children. When ACS
6 arrived, I didn't know they were investigating me,
7 and I was under the impression that they were
8 providing therapy support. After ACS spoke with my
9 children, I had an appointment with ICE. When I went
10 to my second appointment with ICE, they detained me.
11 And when I asked the ICE officer when they were going
12 to release me, he mocked me and said that they were
13 going to deport me because he had a criminal case
14 against me. I was shocked because I had never any
15 contact with the police. I had a panic attack and
16 passed out and was taken to the hospital.

17 My lawyer later discovered that ACS shared my
18 confidential information with ICE, and that's why
19 they detained me.

20 A month passed without being able to see or talk
21 to my children. With the support of my attorney, I
22 was released, but I am still suffering from the
23 trauma of the actions of ACS. I'm here to reveal the
24 injustices that also happened to many families across
25 New York.

1
2 With the incoming Trump Administration, what
3 happened to me and my family will likely happen to
4 many more New York families without impunity. I stand
5 here today to urge city officials to protect mothers
6 and families like mine from local agency collusion
7 with ICE.

8 I call on our council to pass Council Member
9 Hanif's Bill, (TIMER CHIMES) Intro 214, to create a
10 system of accountability for the violation of the
11 sanctuary laws that exist in New York City.

12 No agency should feel emboldened to violate the
13 law, and there should be consequences for when they
14 do.

15 Let's do what is right to keep families in New
16 York City safe and together. The time for our City
17 Council to act is now. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)
19 I'd like to ask the legal service providers, we have
20 Jennifer's case, but I am sure you have seen more.

21 How pervasive would you describe the collusion or
22 use of city resources for ICE enforcement?

23 KARLA OSTOLAZA: It is really hard to know the
24 numbers exactly, I think that's the main problem, is
25 that we find these instances by pure shams. And they

1
2 are really serious and really scary. So it leads us
3 to believe that there is more collusion that we are
4 not seeing in plain light.

5 We also know that DOC, for example, has a very
6 different interpretation of the detainer laws than
7 the one that is clear from the statues, and they do
8 have more communication and collaboration than they
9 are supposed to. So that is a common theme in
10 addition to the ACS issues and, we fear, other
11 agencies, shelters, et cetera.

12 DEBORAH LEE: The only thing that I would add is
13 that, you know, despite our best efforts to provide
14 as much services as we can to as many people that we
15 meet, we only see the smallest fraction of who's out
16 there. And so I would just, you know, emphasize that.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: No. Thank you. I think, uhm,
18 what we saw... I mean, I think one of the biggest
19 challenges we have as a city with immigration is that
20 we need every city agency to be present and testify.
21 Because MOIA cannot testify on behalf of the city
22 agencies. So, it's a constant whack-a-mole situation
23 that we have. So I thank you for your work. And legal
24 service providers are critical, have always been on
25 the frontline of fighting for justice and will be

1
2 equally busy under this new administration. Although,
3 I wish you were all on vacation and we didn't have to
4 do that. Thank you, and let's continue to be in
5 dialogue...

6 DEBORAH LEE: Thank you very much...

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I appreciate your work.

8 For the next panel we have Tania Mattos, Antonio
9 Solis, Katie (phonetic) (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)
10 Katie from WJP, Ingrid Rojas, and Wendy Vintimilla.

11 Wendy from WJP, Ingrid from WJP, Keighly from
12 WJP, Antonio (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE) Los
13 Deliveristas Unidos, and Tania from Unlocal. Oh,
14 Tania, you're here, great.

15 Tania, if you would like to start?

16 TANIA MATTOS: Greetings, Council Member Avilés.
17 my name is Tania Mattos, I am the Executive Director
18 of UnLocal; we're an immigration, legal nonprofit
19 that provides community education outreach and legal
20 representation to immigrants across New York City.

21 So everything that has been said today, I would
22 repeat. But quite simply, New York City must do
23 everything to remain a Sanctuary City. It's just not
24 a matter of fairness, but a public safety necessity,
25 as you understand.

1
2 And we're part of the Pro Se Plus Project which,
3 by the way, I know the Mayor's Office of Immigrant
4 Affairs was working on payments, but we're actually
5 still waiting for payment for work that we've done in
6 2023. So, you know, that is a huge issue for us that
7 we continue to face. And so we cannot do the work if
8 we're not being paid for the work of representing New
9 Yorkers across New York City.

10 So the people that we help with the Pro Se Plus
11 Project, they face, uh, right now there's a lot of
12 uncertainty and fear. And there's actually a lot of
13 extreme rumors that are being spread in the shelters
14 right now on what's going to happen on Monday,
15 starting Monday.

16 So I wanted to let the Council know that this is
17 what we're hearing from clients. And I think it is
18 very imminent that the shelter staff, and MOIA, and
19 the City Council know that, you know, the rhetoric
20 that currently is happening right now is, uh, from
21 the mayor, from other entities is not helping, uhm,
22 people in the shelters with their fears and calming
23 their anxieties.

24 We're also part of the Rapid Response Legal
25 Collaborative alongside Meet the Road and NYLAG (New

1
2 York Legal Assistance Group), and we provide urgent
3 advice and counsel for immigrants facing imminent
4 deportation and detention.

5 And so every day we hear about devastating
6 cycle... the psychological toll that right now people
7 are experiencing because of the threat of deportation
8 and their families. And these group of individuals
9 face heightened level of threat of deportation and
10 detention. So we've seen, uh, witnessed extreme bouts
11 of depression, psychosis, and even suicide attempts.
12 And so this is why it's important for the Council and
13 the City to continue to be a Sanctuary City.

14 And I'll skip to our recommendations, which
15 basically are asking you to support... the City
16 Council to support Intro 214.

17 And, we thank you for your historical support of
18 legislation such as Dignity Not Detention, New York
19 for All, Access to Representation. We ask that you
20 continue to fund legal services committees. Because
21 just because the Pro Se Plus Project, for example, we
22 have less people applying for asylum, but it doesn't
23 mean that these individuals (TIMER CHIMES) don't need
24 continued support for their legal services.

1
2 There are still thousands of people that need
3 continued support on their asylum cases. And, as the
4 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, uhm, defunded
5 the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, we thank the
6 City Council for supplementing that funding as we
7 need it right now. We've seen thousands of more
8 people need that, uh, are reaching out to us for
9 support. I'm sorry, not thousands, hundreds of, uh,
10 people reaching out to us for support for their
11 deportation cases. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Can I ask you, uhm, one of
13 the things that came up obviously with this
14 repackaging of ActionNYC - which doesn't exist, but
15 only exists on their website - and no cost extension,
16 which is asking you to do a lot more work with no
17 recompense, have you had any conversation with MOIA
18 about that?

19 TANIA MATTOS: Actually, UnLocal decided not to be
20 part of that, uh, that contract. We understood the...
21 the downside of it.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

23 Next?
24
25

1
2 INGRID ROJAS (via translator): I want to thank
3 you from the bottom of my heart for giving me the
4 opportunity to speak.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: (INAUDIBLE)

6 TRANSLATOR: Oh, my bad.

7 INGRID ROJAS (via translator): My name is Ingrid
8 Rojas. I'm from Guatemala, and I've been in this
9 country for eight years. I am the mother of two
10 wonderful kids, three and six.

11 I worked for DoorDash during the pandemic, and
12 DoorDash stole \$1,000 from me. They never paid me.
13 They closed my application. I am just... I was also a
14 victim of robbery, the people who robbed me didn't
15 feel anything, they didn't care that I was carrying
16 my baby with me.

17 I came to this country to have a better life. My
18 dream was to become a doctor. But due to my parents
19 possibilities, I was only able to finish secondary
20 school in my country. With the little possibilities I
21 had, I had to immigrate to this country. Here I am.
22 And I want to (TIMER CHIMES) ask you, we don't want
23 to be deported. We don't want to be the victims of
24 the new president. It's just that.

1 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

2 (CROSS-TALK)

3 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon, My name is Wendy
4 Vintimilla... (CROSS-TALK)

5 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

6 TRANSLATOR: I am from Ecuador...

7 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 TRANSLATOR: I have been here in this country for
9 two years.

10 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

11 (CROSS-TALK)

12 TRANSLATOR: Fortunately, I am still alive...

13 (CROSS-TALK)

14 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

15 (CROSS-TALK)

16 TRANSLATOR: Because I had to flee my country...

17 (CROSS-TALK)

18 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

19 (CROSS-TALK)

20 TRANSLATOR: Because of everything that

21 (INAUDIBLE) going on... (CROSS-TALK)

22 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

23 TRANSLATOR: I was tortured, I was threatened...

24
25

1 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

2 (CELL PHONE RINGS)...

3 TRANSLATOR: I came with, uh, my husband's family

4 (BACKGROUND NOISE)

5 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

6 (CROSS-TALK)

7 TRANSLATOR: I left my whole family... (CROSS-TALK)

8 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

9 (CROSS-TALK)

10 TRANSLATOR: My (CELL PHONE RINGS) (INAUDIBLE)

11 work... (CROSS-TALK)

12 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 TRANSLATOR: I had a position...

14 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 TRANSLATOR: It... It was a good position. (CELL

16 PHONE RINGS) I had my own business

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Whoever's phone, please

18 silence all devices. Thank you.

19 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

20 TRANSLATOR: I worked for the government for 17

21 years... (CROSS-TALK)

22 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

23 TRANSLATOR: And I (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

24 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

25

1
2 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) me (INAUDIBLE) help...
3 (CROSS-TALK)
4 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
5 (CROSS-TALK)
6 TRANSLATOR: We had to come, because they killed a
7 family member (INAUDIBLE) my husband... (CROSS-TALK)
8 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
9 (CROSS-TALK)
10 TRANSLATOR: They tried to kill another one...
11 (CROSS-TALK)
12 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
13 (CROSS-TALK)
14 TRANSLATOR: So we had to cross the border, 16
15 people...
16 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
17 (CROSS-TALK)
18 TRANSLATOR: My husband's family... (CROSS-TALK)
19 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
20 (CROSS-TALK)
21 TRANSLATOR: Same (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)
22 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
23 (CROSS-TALK)
24 TRANSLATOR: I was able to get acquainted with the
25 Justice Project... (CROSS-TALK)

1 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
2

3 (CROSS-TALK)

4 TRANSLATOR: Obviously all of the expenses...

5 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
6

6 (CROSS-TALK)

7 TRANSLATOR: Because you have to work (INAUDIBLE)
8 to survive... (CROSS-TALK)

9 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
10

10 (CROSS-TALK)

11 TRANSLATOR: We don't want to be a burden in this
12 country...

13 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
14

14 (CROSS-TALK)

15 TRANSLATOR: Because we were never a burden in our
16 own country...

17 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
18

18 (CROSS-TALK)

19 TRANSLATOR: And thanks to Labor Justice...

20 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
21

21 (CROSS-TALK)

22 TRANSLATOR: They helped me get a work
23 authorization...

24 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)
25

1
2 TRANSLATOR: So that was my Christmas present. But
3 I am... (CROSS-TALK)

4 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

5 TRANSLATOR: I am still afraid for all
6 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

7 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
8 (CROSS-TALK)

9 TRANSLATOR: because we don't know what's going to
10 happen with the new president.

11 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 TRANSLATOR: Everybody's afraid. There's memes all
13 over the place. We don't know. So, I want to ask, we
14 need the support to be able to come with tools...

15 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

16 TRANSLATOR: The necessary tools to defend
17 ourselves. But also to ensure that we are not the
18 target of deportation.

19 A lot of us we are afraid to continue living
20 here. (TIMER CHIMES)... (CROSS-TALK)

21 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
22 (CROSS-TALK)

23 TRANSLATOR: also to... (TIMER CHIMES) (CROSS-
24 TALK)

1 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

2
3 (CROSS-TALK)

4 TRANSLATOR: just to think of us going back to our
5 country, to die there, because the situation is
6 really hard.

7 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

8 (CROSS-TALK)

9 TRANSLATOR: I am very nervous about... (CROSS-
10 TALK)

11 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

12 (CROSS-TALK)

13 TRANSLATOR: but I beg... (CROSS-TALK)

14 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

15 (CROSS-TALK)

16 TRANSLATOR: all of the authorities not only to
17 support women, but to support all immigrants. We are
18 not a burden in this country. We want to have a
19 permit so we can... so, we can give back. So we can
20 pay taxes that is necessary. But, council members,
21 the mayor, we want you to help us. Associations like
22 the Project, and all of the associations that

23 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

24 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

25 (CROSS-TALK)

1
2 TRANSLATOR: everybody to live with dignity as
3 human beings. And not to have the fear. We are tired
4 of living with fear. We are dying from fear of
5 hiding...

6 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
7 (CROSS-TALK)

8 TRANSLATOR: fear not to go out. We want to live
9 free like a (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

10 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
11 (CROSS-TALK)

12 TRANSLATOR: with nothing bad happening to us...

13 WENDY VINTIMILLA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
14 (CROSS-TALK)

15 TRANSLATOR: So may God fill you heart with peace
16 and harmony - also, to the new president, and, uh,
17 for him not to see us as bad people, as terrorists,
18 people that come to this country to damage it. We are
19 people that come here to this country to work, to
20 give back to society. And may God take care of all of
21 us.

22 WENDY VINTIMILLA: Gracias

23 TRANSLATOR: Thank you.

24 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)
25

1
2 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon. My name is Kerly
3 Pozon. I am a mother, uhm, of a baby, she is three-
4 months old.

5 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...
6 (CROSS-TALK)

7 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) of, uh, Labor Justice
8 Project. I was also a worker as other 50 that are
9 currently fighting against a company that...

10 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 TRANSLATOR: Yeah, it is a tobacco company. And we
14 faced several labor abuses because this company
15 was... (CROSS-TALK)

16 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

17 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) more than 90 hours,
18 locked up with no light. And we were paid \$7.00 an
19 hour. Me and my coworkers are fighting against this
20 company. We already filed with OSHA... (CROSS-TALK)

21 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

22 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) Department of Labor, and
23 currently Brooklyn's District Attorney's Office is
24 investigating this company.

1
2 I came here, and the day after I arrived, I
3 started working here. I suffered many abuses. I even
4 had numbing in my arms, because of the process...

5 (CROSS-TALK)

6 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

7 TRANSLATOR: it was very (INAUDIBLE) the tobacco
8 was very strong. (TIMER CHIMES) So, I, me and many
9 other of my coworkers, uh, we had lacerations in our
10 feet. These were inadequate conditions. Currently,
11 the Labor Justice Project is helping us with the work
12 authorization. So they (INAUDIBLE) program... (CROSS-
13 TALK)

14 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 TRANSLATOR: of (INAUDIBLE) Action. And I am still
16 not currently approved. And many of my coworkers
17 (INAUDIBLE)...

18 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

19 TRANSLATOR: So, I beg you to help us with that.
20 Because it is very hard to be constantly in fear.

21 I have a daughter and I am afraid to go back to
22 our country, it's so dangerous. And, also, I am
23 fearful for her life. That's all.

24 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

25 TRANSLATOR: It is very moving. It's sad...

1 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

2 (CROSS-TALK)

3 TRANSLATOR: My name is Antonio Solis. I am a
4 member of the Justice Labor Project.

5 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

6 TRANSLATOR: Thank you...

7 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 TRANSLATOR: Council Member Alexa Avilés....

9 (CROSS-TALK)

10 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

11 (CROSS-TALK)

12 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) bravery and courage.

13 (INAUDIBLE) and all the work... (CROSS-TALK)

14 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

15 (CROSS-TALK)

16 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

17 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

18 TRANSLATOR: But there is still many things to do
19 in the... (CROSS-TALK)

20 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

21 TRANSLATOR: future. But I do agree (INAUDIBLE)...

22 (CROSS-TALK)

23 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

24 (CROSS-TALK)

1 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) workers... (CROSS-TALK

2 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

3 (CROSS-TALK)

4 TRANSLATOR: Deliverers, uh, vendors... (CROSS-
5 TALK)

6 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

7 (CROSS-TALK)

8 TRANSLATOR: We are afraid with what's coming up.
9 But we have to be brave. We have to organize workers,
10 our... (CROSS-TALK)

11 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

12 (CROSS-TALK)

13 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) and know that you are not
14 alone. That you will... (CROSS-TALK)

15 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

16 (CROSS-TALK)

17 TRANSLATOR: support us. And to know that we have
18 council members like you and other council members to
19 support us...

20 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

21 (CROSS-TALK)

22 TRANSLATOR: As workers we should not be afraid.
23 We should be brave. We have to organize in the
24 streets...

1 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

2 (CROSS-TALK)

3 TRANSLATOR: as essential workers, because we are
4 essential workers in New York City. We have to keep
5 going... (CROSS-TALK)

6 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

7 (CROSS-TALK)

8 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) also afraid for my other
9 delivery workers. We work day and night... (CROSS-
10 TALK)

11 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

12 (CROSS-TALK)

13 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) afraid that they'd be
14 taken, they can send us to courts, and from there,
15 they'd deport us. So, it is essential to... (CROSS-
16 TALK)

17 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

18 (CROSS-TALK)

19 TRANSLATOR: press the police (INAUDIBLE) with
20 ICE. We are delivery workers... (CROSS-TALK)

21 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

22 (CROSS-TALK)

23 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) and we are afraid to
24 work. (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

1 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

2 (CROSS-TALK)

3 TRANSLATOR: And we have to work. So we have to
4 (INAUDIBLE) the streets... (CROSS-TALK)

5 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

6 (CROSS-TALK)

7 TRANSLATOR: We have to keep organizing the
8 workers... (CROSS-TALK)

9 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

10 (CROSS-TALK)

11 TRANSLATOR: We need to educate them. (TIMER
12 CHIMES) ... (CROSS-TALK)

13 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

14 (CROSS-TALK)

15 TRANSLATOR: We need to tell them not to be
16 afraid.

17 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

18 (CROSS-TALK)

19 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) the worker has a lot of
20 power when organizing. We need to give them
21 information. And thank you for your leadership. And
22 thank you to every single person that is here.

23 (INAUDIBLE)...

24
25

1 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

2 (CROSS-TALK)

3 TRANSLATOR: fighting for (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-
4 TALK)

5 ANTONIO SOLIS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)...

6 (CROSS-TALK)

7 TRANSLATOR: for the betterment of this country.
8 We don't ask for anything for free. We just ask for
9 our rights. For the rights that we all have in this
10 country. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 TRANSLATOR: Thank you for your support.

14 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 TRANSLATOR: And hopefully is not (INAUDIBLE) here
16 in the year of Trump.

17 KERLY POZO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

18 TRANSLATOR: And we hope that all immigrants
19 can... (CROSS-TALK)

20 ANTONIO SOLIS: Gracias...

21 TRANSLATOR: live the way it should be...

22 UNKNOWN: Gracias...

23 TRANSLATOR: with dignity. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much.
25

1
2 And the next panel we will have Lauren Migliaccio,
3 I am so sorry, Lauren; Margaret Martin; Lauren Reiff;
4 Keighly Rector; Rosa Cohen-Cruz; and Thinley from the
5 Koren American Family Service Association.

6 I recognize when I mispronounce your names, I am
7 offending the ancestors, so I really do not want to
8 do that. I thank you all for being here.

9 And please state your names, before you testify,
10 for the record.

11 LAUREN MIGLIACCIO: Good afternoon, Chair Avilés,
12 I have submitted written testimony, so in the
13 interest of time, it's been a long day with a lot of
14 very powerful testimony, I'm going to keep it brief
15 and put a finer point on some of the questions that
16 you have asked other people who have testified today
17 and summarize what is presented in our written
18 testimony.

19 I would like to start by saying my name is Lauren
20 Migliaccio, am the Training and Legal Technical
21 Assistance Director at Immigrant Justice Corps. We
22 are the first legal fellowship program that places
23 fellows at immigration legal service providers.

24 What is coming in the next few days in this new
25 administration does promise mass deportations. After

1 reviewing Project 2025, line by line, what has been
2 clear is that there are going to be sea changes in
3 immigration law that are going to impact our
4 communities here, our neighbors, our friends.

5 And something that has come up several times
6 today is that this is no longer a mere threat. And
7 one of the tools that the Administration used the
8 first time was chaos, confusion, and massive changes
9 to law.

10 Staying on top of this is going to require legal
11 service providers in partnership with agencies to
12 stay on top of these changes in the law, but also to
13 understand what this means for our communities. And
14 New York for All and Access to Representation are
15 examples of what we can do to protect New Yorkers.

16 It is an urgent matter that is going to come into
17 play because access to counsel is something that has
18 come up even today in mitigation.

19 When there is harm done to our community members
20 and state and local law enforcement agencies
21 cooperate and collude with immigration agencies,
22 mitigation no longer speaks to what can be undone.

23 Things have been put in place that cannot be
24 undone, and representation and adequate training and
25

1
2 funding for legal service providers is the only
3 remedy. And even that does not (TIMER CHIMES) mean
4 that, people will be protected from deportation.

5 The last thing I would like to say is that
6 sanctuary laws are also not enough. Sanctuary laws
7 here in New York merely exist, but as we have heard
8 today, that does not stop federal agencies from
9 detaining people in our communities and on our
10 streets.

11 And lastly, I would just like to point out that
12 what has come up again today is Know Your Rights
13 presentations, and that is preventative medicine that
14 can and will help our communities.

15 THINLEY WANGCHUK: Good afternoon, I would like to
16 thank Chairperson Alexa Avilés and the members of the
17 Committee on Immigration for the opportunity to
18 testify today.

19 I am Thinley Wangchuk, Data Analysis and
20 Communications Coordinator at the Korean American
21 Family Service Center, KAFSC.

22 For over 36 years, KAFSC has provided life saving
23 services to immigrant survivors of gender based
24 violence, domestic violence, and other forms of
25 violence, along with their children.

1
2 Our services include counseling, case management,
3 transitional housing, economic empowerment
4 initiatives, youth programs, and 24/7 access to our
5 bilingual hotline and emergency shelter.

6 KAFSC is also a member of The Collective, the
7 only coalition of culturally specific gender justice
8 organizations in New York City.

9 Each year, KAFSC serves over 3,000 individuals.
10 In 2024, KAFSC responded to over 5,000 calls related
11 to gender based violence, domestic violence, sexual
12 assault, child abuse, and trafficking through our 24
13 hour hotline.

14 Ninety-eight percent of our clients identify as
15 immigrants, and 98% live below the poverty line. A
16 significant portion of our clients are undocumented
17 and face barriers to accessing basic services.

18 Recognizing these needs, we have expanded our
19 programs to include mental health services, cash
20 assistance, public health benefits, and more.

21 Given the changing political landscape, the
22 upcoming administration's policy shifts may risk, uh,
23 may pose risks to funding for immigrant services,
24 restrict pathways to legal status, and create
25 heightened fear of deportation within immigrant

1
2 communities. These uncertainties compound the
3 existing struggles and barriers faced by our clients,
4 particularly undocumented survivors who remain
5 excluded from resources.

6 To address these barriers KAFSC, (TIMER CHIMES)
7 along with our community based partners, urges the
8 City to invest in culturally and linguistically
9 competent services by prioritizing funding for
10 community based organizations that provide culturally
11 tailored, language accessible, and survivor centered
12 approaches.

13 Lastly, implementing inclusive local policies
14 that protect undocumented survivors and ensure access
15 to basic income, health care, and other support is
16 imperative. KAFSC remains committed to working
17 collaboratively with the City Council and our
18 partners to address this issue and pressing the
19 pressing needs of immigrant survivors and their
20 families. Thank you.

21 LAUREN REIFF: Hi, good afternoon, and thank you
22 for the opportunity to testify.

23 My name is Lauren Reiff, and I'm the Associate
24 Director of the Immigrant Protection Unit at NYLAG

1
2 I will be submitting written testimony, so I just
3 want to highlight a couple of key points here that I
4 think are important in light of what has already been
5 said.

6 So as a member of the Rapid Response Legal
7 Collaborative together with UnLocal and Make the Road
8 New York, NYLAG has been in a position to see that
9 since the election ICE has already substantially
10 ramped up enforcement efforts and has already begun
11 what we're all talking about as if (INAUDIBLE) for
12 the future.

13 It's actually present right now that people are
14 being deported at a rate we haven't seen in a while,
15 that raids are occurring at a rate that we haven't
16 seen in a while. And that for the first time in my
17 memory, it's not only adults, but families with
18 children who are being collectively removed from the
19 country in violation of current policies of the Biden
20 Administration, because ICE understands that those
21 won't be in place very much longer.

22 So this is a matter of significant urgency right
23 now, and I really appreciate that this committee is
24 overseeing data collection to make sure that the City
25 isn't contributing to this problem.

1
2 NYLAG is also proudly partnered with WIN, a
3 shelter provider in New York City, and through our
4 partnership with them, we've also seen, that the City
5 has increased its data collection with regard to
6 immigrant families in shelter.

7 In particular through the NYC HOST database,
8 shelter providers are required to collect information
9 such as alien numbers, countries of origin, dates of
10 entry for people residing in shelter, and that
11 database is available to not only the city agencies,
12 but also all the contractors can see information
13 about the residents of every other shelter who is
14 using this database.

15 And that information has been shared with, for
16 example, the National Guard, (TIMER CHIMES), which
17 has gone into shelters and knocked on doors for the
18 purpose of scheduling appointments at the Asylum
19 Seeker Navigation Center.

20 But, nevertheless, the information is being
21 collected and shared freely without regard for the
22 privacy laws and the sanctuary laws that the City has
23 implemented.

24 So we would ask that the, Council take steps to
25 cause the City to cease to collect unnecessary data,

1
2 add enforceability measures such as Intro 214 and,
3 invest in legal services.

4 We appreciate that MOIA is expanding Know Your
5 Rights and screenings, but information without the
6 support of legal services is insufficient. And to the
7 extent that the provisioning of these additional
8 services is coming at the expense of funding for
9 legal services, it's actively harmful. Thank you for
10 your time.

11 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Hello again, my name is Rosa
12 Cohen-Cruz; now I'm testifying in my capacity as the
13 Director of Immigration Policy for The Bronx
14 Defenders.

15 At the Bronx Defenders, we represent many people
16 who face harm at the hands of New York agencies
17 colluding with ICE. The NYPD and New York DOC are two
18 of the worst actors, not only colluding with ICE, but
19 doing so with explicit antiimmigrant animus as this
20 Council witnessed during the February 2023 joint
21 hearing of the Immigration and Criminal Justice
22 Committee.

23 And since then, we've only witnessed increased
24 violations for the protections of immigrants, that
25 this city put in place years ago, with no private

1
2 action or other enforcement mechanisms. These
3 agencies continue to violate the protections that
4 exist with impunity.

5 As lawyers working both the criminal immigration
6 courts, we know that when ICE is involved, they don't
7 care about the interests of the City or about New
8 Yorkers, and their involvement undermines due process
9 for those who have been charged with crimes and
10 really creates chaos in both systems, both
11 immigration and criminal.

12 When someone's attained by ICE with an open
13 criminal case, ICE routinely fails to bring the
14 person to court for their appearance. But then
15 meanwhile, in immigration court, immigration judges
16 routinely deny bond because of the open criminal
17 case. The case basically remains open because of
18 ICE's inaction, and people are trapped between these
19 two systems without an opportunity for liberty.

20 Immigrant New Yorkers, like all New Yorkers who
21 face charges, have a right to due process and to
22 defend themselves and to be presumed innocent.

23 Our city also can't function if millions of our
24 community members fear interaction with city
25 officials. All New Yorkers want to know that their

1
2 neighbor will not hesitate to call for help if
3 there's a fire or a medical emergency or something
4 else.

5 All families deserve for our children to feel
6 safe in public school and everyone needs to be able
7 to use the subway to get to our jobs and homes, yet
8 NYPD now occupies our subways and police officers are
9 often the first faces our students see when they
10 enter schools.

11 At that February 2023 hearing, Michael Clark, the
12 Director of Legislative Affairs for the NYPD,
13 actually said it's important... he said it's
14 important to state unequivocally that the (TIMER
15 CHIMES) NYPD does not engage in immigration
16 enforcement. We know that to be a lie.

17 He also went on to say if certain groups of New
18 Yorkers do not feel confident they can interact with
19 the police, they will become permanent victims to be
20 preyed upon by criminals with no fear of the
21 consequences of their actions.

22 The reality that we've all heard today is that
23 city agencies working with ICE that have violated our
24 city's laws and preyed on immigrants with no fear of
25 the consequences of their actions.

1
2 With all due respect to MOIA, written guidance is
3 not gonna be enough to create real accountability. We
4 need the solutions that are at hand at the disposal
5 in the city and state. That includes Intro 214
6 pending before the City Council. It includes laws at
7 the state level, such as New York for All and the
8 Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act with this which
9 disentangle New York state resources from aiding in
10 ICE enforcement and detention.

11 We have the power to make sure state resources
12 are not being funneled into enforcement and
13 detention, and we just need to have the courage to do
14 it.

15 We also need to make sure we're fully funding
16 NYIFUP and ensuring that the policies against
17 collusion with ICE are not only being shared across
18 agencies, that we have clear policies from agencies,
19 that there's clear training on implementation, but
20 also that that guidance is public.

21 And I will reserve the rest of my comments for my
22 written testimony. Thank you.

23 KEIGHLY RECTOR: Good afternoon, and thank you,
24 Chair Avilés. This is not part of my testimony, but I
25 just want to thank you so sincerely, I've been

1 sitting here for many hours; you acknowledge that
2 we've been here for many hours, but you have too.
3 And, it's been a dark few months in the advocacy
4 space for our noncitizen neighbors, and I think this
5 is a really needed breath of fresh air just to see
6 what it can look like when our government, when our
7 representatives genuinely care.
8

9 You heard from so many people today, obviously,
10 legal service providers, but members of the
11 community, and the care and intentionality that you
12 took to respond to each one of them was just really
13 moving. And I want to just acknowledge the time and
14 emotional energy that goes into that, and thank you.

15 My name is Keighly Rector, I am the Director Of
16 The Immigration Project at Volunteers of Legal
17 Service or VOLS, and we partner with New York City's
18 leading law firms and corporations to provide free
19 legal services to low income New Yorkers through our
20 inhouse team and by leveraging pro bono attorneys.

21 Our mission is to increase access to justice for
22 the City's residents, including immigrant youth and
23 their families.

24 Since its inception, the Immigration Project has
25 built deep relationships with educators and staff at

1
2 over 30 of the City's immigrant serving public
3 schools, colleges, and community based organizations.

4 Those community partnerships allow us to reach
5 young people where they feel safest and help ensure
6 that their legal needs are met.

7 We've shared written testimony which details our
8 recommendations to City Council. I do want to
9 highlight three pieces of those recommendations
10 today.

11 First, as you've heard from my colleagues here
12 and from many of the brilliant people who came before
13 you today, the City's sanctuary policies are an
14 absolute lifeline. The legislative actions like the
15 New York for All Act would further strengthen those.

16 I had planned to talk a bit about the importance
17 of those sanctuary policies in schools, because so
18 many of our clients are students (TIMER CHIMES) at
19 many of the international high schools, but there's
20 nothing that I could say that was better than the
21 young woman who spoke from Make the Road earlier. So
22 I will defer entirely to her expertise.

23 I would encourage the Committee to explore how it
24 might be possible to have similar protections in
25

1
2 place for the locations where legal services are
3 provided.

4 Many of our clients express fear or hesitation
5 about speaking with attorneys often rooted in
6 experiences from their home countries where legal
7 systems are corrupt or untrustworthy, plus there's,
8 confusion about the U.S. legal system that can lead
9 to anxiety about sharing information with an
10 immigration attorney that could somehow inadvertently
11 harm them or be reported to government agencies,
12 especially because, as we've heard today, that is
13 absolutely happening outside of legal service
14 providers.

15 That creates a barrier to accessing justice, and
16 so we would really encourage the Council to explore
17 ways that VOLS and other legal service providers can
18 be safer places for our immigrant clients to seek the
19 legal services that they need.

20 Second, we need to increase support for long term
21 noncitizen residents. There's been a lot of funded
22 initiatives in the past few years to focus on
23 recently arrived individuals and not to minimize the
24 importance of that at all.

1
2 But those who have been here often for decades
3 are overlooked in the current funding structure even
4 though they face great, if not greater risks, under
5 the new administration.

6 An example of that would be client A who's been
7 here since 2023. They filed their asylum application.
8 They have their work permit. Their next hearing in
9 immigration court isn't for several years. Contrast
10 that to client B who's been here since 2009, maybe
11 entered with their family as a child, has an old
12 deportation order that they may or may not know
13 about, they are at imminent, imminent risk of ICE
14 enforcement and reinstatement of that order or
15 enforcement of that order. Yet legal service
16 providers who are funded to be focusing on recent
17 arrivals may feel obligated to deprioritize client B
18 because of what they're being told by their funders
19 to focus on.

20 Finally, I want to emphasize the topic that
21 we've, uh, that's already been talked about a lot
22 today, the rhetoric that we're seeing from City
23 leadership. And the recent murder of 17-year-old
24 Yeremi Colina is a stark example. So on December 5th
25 last year, Yeremi was fatally stabbed in downtown

1
2 Manhattan, and there were initial reports suggesting
3 that the assailants asked Yeremi and his friends if
4 they spoke English before they attacked them.

5 That suggested, obviously, a potentially racially
6 based motivation. But then subsequent statements from
7 City officials shifted that narrative, cast doubt on
8 the account, and suggested seemingly without evidence
9 possible gang affiliations among the young victims.

10 This abrupt change not only contradicted the
11 survivor's accounts, but caused significant distress
12 for the victims' families, exacerbating their trauma
13 and eroding trust in public officials.

14 This is dangerous. When public officials,
15 including City leaders, undermine victims' accounts
16 and perpetuate harmful stereotypes, they send a clear
17 message that noncitizens cannot rely on their
18 government for protection. And this compounded by
19 federal proposals like the Laken Riley Act escalate
20 fear, division, and harm to the very communities we
21 seek to support.

22 This committee has the opportunity to ensure our
23 city continues its laudable tradition of protecting
24 all immigrants through policies and through
25 accountability.

1
2 And we thank you so much for the work we do and
3 look forward to continuing to partner with you.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. I just want to
5 take moment, thank you for highlighting Yeremi's
6 case. It is an awful, awful tragedy. A beautiful
7 young man who actually was connected to my community
8 because of his love of soccer and, uh, his family is
9 experiencing just awful, awful trauma. So, we must do
10 better. And, thank you for the recommendations for
11 the work you do. We will certainly follow-up. And
12 thank you, in particular, also for flagging long term
13 immigrant residents who have been saying, "Don't
14 forget about us." And you are absolutely right, we
15 want to make sure make sure we ensure a full
16 continuum to support all New Yorkers who have been
17 here for multiple decades or 10 minutes. So thank you
18 for the work that you do.

19 KEIGHLY RECTOR: Thank you.

20 MARGARET MARTIN: Good afternoon, thank you,
21 Council Chair Avilés, and members of the Immigration
22 Committee.

23 I will try to keep this short.

24 And just to reiterate, like, so grateful to you
25 for holding this hearing and listening to all of the

1 testimony today, particularly at this time when we're
2 all waiting to see what happens, over the next
3 several days.

4
5 My name is Margaret Martin, I'm the Codirector
6 (CLEARS THROAT) excuse me, I have a little bit of a
7 cold. I'm the Co-Director of Immigrant and Refugee
8 Services Division at Catholic Charities Community
9 Services with the Archdiocese of New York.

10 Catholic Charities is proud of our decades long
11 tradition of welcoming New York's immigrants and
12 refugees. We have a long history of partnering with
13 New York City, New York State and other nonprofit
14 organizations on protecting New York's immigrant
15 communities through a wide, and robust variety of
16 legal services programs, case management services,
17 ESOL programs and day laborers support in programming
18 in the Bronx. These programs directly impact tens of
19 thousands of New Yorkers every year.

20 Like everybody else in this room, we are
21 concerned with how best to protect and assist New
22 Yorkers and our immigrant communities in the coming
23 days, weeks and, and years.

24 And so just to highlight a few items from my
25 testimony, I'm going to skip over all the reasons why

1
2 it's important that we have sanctuary policy law in
3 New York, and not only have it, but as other people
4 have so well articulated, ensure that it is actually
5 upheld and followed.

6 We are getting reports at Catholic Charities, as
7 I'm sure others are as well, of people who are
8 concerned with whether they should send their
9 children to school, with whether it is okay to
10 interact with a police officer or should they
11 encounter somebody, walk to the other end of the
12 platform, or even call the police in an emergency, if
13 that will somehow entangle them in the immigration
14 system.

15 So we are very concerned with the communication
16 that's coming out about our sanctuary laws in New
17 York, and what may happen with those. (TIMER CHIMES)
18 Wow. I thought I was being really quick.

19 Okay, I just will say very quickly, on legal
20 services, thank you for bringing that up, uhm, we are
21 an ActionNYC legal service provider, as well as many
22 other programs. And in addition to the Rapid Response
23 that I think we're all going to be seeing, the real
24 need for legal representation that you yourself
25 raised this morning, uhm, the Know Your Rights

1
2 Presentations, we are getting many requests for those
3 already. All the nonprofit service providers that are
4 doing that work now, we're operating beyond our
5 capacity to do that.

6 And once Rapid Response starts, which it will, as
7 ICE begins arresting and detaining people, we will
8 again be operating beyond our capacity.

9 I just want to note as well that many of us have
10 some federal funding for legal services programs. And
11 some of that federal funding, well, much of it is at
12 risk and some of it is at more risk than others.

13 We operate the Immigration Court Help Desk. It is
14 not a mandated program. It is federally funded. We've
15 been doing it since 2016. It's also not a very
16 expensive program, but it is proved critical to
17 unrepresented people in removal proceedings. And
18 immigration judges rely on us to be able to send
19 confused respondents down the hall to see Catholic
20 Charities to get information and a legal screening,
21 and, then, whenever possible, we will take those
22 cases. Even though the federal government won't pay
23 for representation, we will try to take them in house
24 or send them to a trusted provider.

1
2 I will save the rest of my comments for my
3 written testimony. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, thank you so much
5 particularly for flagging this other very important
6 point of intervention in the Immigration Court, thank
7 you.

8 So, I guess with that, we are going to call the
9 next panel. We are going to have Marie Mark, Ashley
10 Peguero, Taina Wagnac, Zachary Ahmed, Mackenna
11 Vickery, and Sierra Kraft.

12 (PAUSE)

13 SIERRA KRAFT: Hi, good afternoon, Chairperson
14 Avilés, and members of the Committee on Immigration
15 thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and for
16 holding this hearing and the very invigorating rally
17 this morning. I really didn't realize how much I
18 needed that. I just feel very much a part of this
19 community. So thank you for taking the time to do
20 that.

21 My name is Sierra Kraft, and I'm the Executive
22 Director of the of ICARE. We're a coalition of legal
23 service organizations providing free legal
24 representation to unaccompanied children facing
25 deportation in New York City.

1
2 Today, I want to highlight the urgent need for
3 increased protections and resources for immigrant
4 youth. Nearly 2 million children in New York City,
5 that's one in two, have at least one immigrant
6 parent.

7 These children and families are vital to our
8 city's strength, and yet they walk around with
9 targets on their backs as they face the escalating
10 threats from federal policies designed to harm and
11 divide.

12 No child should fear going to school and no
13 family should live in constant fear of being torn
14 apart.

15 Bold action and increased investment are needed
16 in this moment. And we're proud to stand alongside
17 the Council in supporting the transformative
18 legislation like the Access to Representation Act and
19 the New York for All.

20 These measures are vital to ensuring immigrant
21 communities remain safe and protected. But beyond
22 this legislative advocacy, we need immediate and
23 substantial investments to address the growing need
24 and demand for legal services.
25

1
2 At ICARE we've seen firsthand what legal
3 representation means for unaccompanied children. Most
4 of the people we serve have the right to remain in
5 this country, but without a lawyer navigating the
6 immigration system is nearly impossible.

7 But with legal representation, their chance of
8 success jumps to over 90%. Last year, ICARE served
9 over 2,000 children, but the demand far exceeds the
10 available resources. So we urge the Council to take
11 bold action in three key areas: increase funding for
12 immigration legal services; legal representation
13 saves lives and keeps families together, and
14 expanding funding ensures that no child has to face
15 immigration court alone; strengthen protections for
16 immigrant communities, (TIMER CHIMES) and invest in
17 community education and outreach. So increase funding
18 for Know Your Rights training and language access
19 programs.

20 Thank you for your ongoing commitment to
21 uplifting immigrant communities, and we look forward
22 to our continued partnership together.

23 ZACHARY AHMAD: Hi, is my time starting yet?

24 (LAUGHTER)

1
2 ZACHARY AHMAD: Okay, good afternoon, my name is
3 Zachary Ahmed - I'm sorry, good afternoon, my name is
4 Zachary Ahmed, I'm a senior policy counsel at the New
5 York Civil Liberties Union. I know time is very
6 limited today, so I'll try to be brief, and I did
7 submit written testimony in advance, so I'd refer you
8 to that for more robust recommendations.

9 We are all aware of the context of today's
10 hearing, with, president-elect Trump's inauguration
11 coming up in a matter of days. And the anxiety about
12 what lies ahead is only heightened by Mayor Adams'
13 disgraceful embrace of Trump and apparent eagerness
14 to work with his administration to detain and deport
15 people.

16 For more than three decades, our city has had in
17 place policies that limit how city employees can
18 interact with immigration authorities. These policies
19 have been in place in different forms under
20 Democratic and Republican mayors and have more
21 recently been codified into law. Yet the mayor
22 appears poised to abandon this legacy.

23 Notwithstanding some of the more positive testimony
24 we heard from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
25 this morning, we have also heard and observed the

1
2 mayor's words and actions. The mayor has cozied up to
3 Trump. He has gone out of his way to criticize and
4 undermine the City's well established sanctuary laws,
5 and he has repeatedly hinted at rolling back those
6 laws while remaining vague about how he might try to
7 do so.

8 This is a dark moment for our country and an
9 uncertain moment for our city, but it's also an
10 opportunity for the City Council to exercise its
11 authority and both maintain and strengthen our city's
12 commitment to immigrants.

13 Threats by the mayor aside, I want to focus on
14 just a few things that the Council can do right now
15 to make sure that our duly enacted laws in play...
16 that we have in place serve their purpose.

17 First, as others have testified to, it's
18 imperative that the Council take up and pass Intro
19 214 of 2024, sponsored by Council Member Hanif. Our
20 laws can't function without accountability, and this
21 bill would serve as an important deterrent for those
22 who might maliciously violate the law and turn people
23 over to ICE, as we know has happened, and as others
24 have testified to.

1
2 Second, the Council should develop legislation
3 that mandates specific steps agencies must take to
4 implement the law. You know, we heard earlier from
5 the Administration that they have issued some general
6 guidance to agencies and begun to roll out some kind
7 of training. That is a step, (TIMER CHIMES) I would
8 love to know what that says. But it's really unclear
9 to... that... it's unclear whether employees know
10 about their obligations with respect to these laws or
11 know what they mean in the context of their day to
12 day jobs. So the Council should explore legislation
13 that specifically mandates certain types of
14 implementation.

15 Finally, really quickly, the City should explore
16 creating an independent commission to monitor
17 compliance with these disentanglement laws and
18 investigate alleged violations. That would be an
19 effective use of the City Council's power and
20 resources and would help ensure that we have
21 continued oversight of how these laws are being
22 implemented, not merely through hearings like this,
23 but on an ongoing and dedicated basis.

24 And I'll stop there, and we did submit written
25 testimony. Thank you.

1
2 MARIE MARK: Thank you for having me and for
3 holding this hearing today. I'm Marie Mark, the
4 Executive Director of the Immigrant Defense Project,
5 where we fight for justice for all, including those
6 targeted by the racist criminal and immigration
7 systems.

8 Sanctuary is a lot of things. We know it is a
9 policy, it is a law, but it is also a value. It's our
10 city's way of respecting immigrants and guaranteeing
11 that the people who work for our local institutions
12 will not be secret agents of ICE.

13 Sanctuary is how the city acts against the
14 injustice of double punishment when immigrant New
15 Yorkers disproportionately Black immigrants and other
16 immigrants of color, are funneled to ICE for
17 detention and deportation after an arrest or the end
18 of a criminal sentence.

19 Our city is struggling right now, and we have a
20 incoming federal administration that has vowed to
21 attack the immigrants among us. The mayor and the
22 governor are abdicating their responsibility to serve
23 all New Yorkers by proposing using resources to
24 facilitate mass deportation. We're encouraged that
25

1
2 this committee and the Speaker have stood by our
3 laws, but right now we need action.

4 Two years ago, we sat before this council at a
5 hearing to shine light on how violations of our
6 existing laws result in severe life changing
7 consequences. Thousands of pages of email
8 correspondence between DOC and ICE revealed a deep
9 culture of collusion, including routine illegal
10 communication and intentional release delays to
11 facilitate ICE arrests.

12 To date, the Administration has done nothing to
13 address this, but this City Council can take action.

14 We're calling on the Committee to hold a hearing
15 and pass Intro 214, which would ensure the city
16 agencies cannot ignore and misinterpret our sanctuary
17 laws, and instead will be held accountable including
18 through money damages if they violate them.

19 This would ensure our sanctuary laws are enforced
20 and not disregarded by a mayor (TIMER CHIMES)
21 attempting to take unilateral action.

22 We are also calling on the Council to pass a
23 resolution in support of a state bill, the New York
24 for All Act, to ensure immigrants are protected from
25 local collusion throughout our state.

1
2 We must take action to apply... we must take
3 action that applies equally to all immigrant New
4 Yorkers. This would mitigate the racism and
5 inequality that plagued the criminal legal system by
6 ending the criminalization to deportation to pipeline
7 in our state.

8 We cannot be a welcoming city for immigrant New
9 Yorkers while colluding with ICE to funnel community
10 members into immigration jails. I urge you to take
11 action now.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Marie.

13 MACKENNA VICKERY: Good afternoon, thank you for
14 your work and your time here today. My name is
15 Mackenna Vickery, and I'm a paralegal with The Doors
16 Legal Services Center.

17 The Door is a comprehensive youth development
18 organization. Our legal services center specializes
19 in serving young people in their immigration cases.

20 Many immigrant young people, including those who
21 cross the border as unaccompanied children, rely on
22 safe access to New York City shelters as they process
23 their immigration cases and find their footing in the
24 city. Facing a shortage of beds in youth shelters, we
25 have seen vulnerable 18, 19, and 20 year olds being

1 placed in emergency response and relief centers,
2 which are easy targets for ICE since their shelter is
3 designed specifically for immigrants, the vast
4 majority of whom do not yet have legal status.
5

6 If ICE is permitted to conduct raids on shelters
7 or allowed to access personal identifying information
8 about immigrants in shelters, many young people would
9 be left without a safe place to live.

10 For young immigrants who are seeking legal
11 protection from threats to their lives or severe
12 abuse, neglect, or abandonment, such lack of access
13 to safe residences would be detrimental to their
14 mental and physical well-being.

15 Door members have expressed similar concerns that
16 schools will soon be targeted during ICE raids,
17 jeopardizing their safety and their access to
18 education and key support systems.

19 The City must ensure that schools remain safe
20 zones and to take particular steps to protect
21 students at specialized transfer and international
22 schools, which primarily serve recent immigrants.

23 Finally, increased ICE presence could severely
24 impact young people's ability to seek special
25 immigrant juvenile status or SIJS.

1
2 To be granted SIJS, a young person needs to have
3 a legal guardian in New York City. The guardian's
4 immigration status does not matter. An adult can go
5 through the family court guardianship process even if
6 they're undocumented. However, with the incoming
7 administration, participating in a young person SIJS
8 case could make undocumented New Yorkers dangerously
9 visible to immigration authorities. Such a shift
10 could leave many young people without viable
11 guardians, depriving them of their right to obtain
12 legal status.

13 In the interest of protecting young people's
14 rights to seek legal status, attend schools, and
15 access shelters, it is imperative that the City
16 Council adopt today's proposed resolutions and bills
17 that promise to maintain New York's position as a
18 Sanctuary City. Thank you.

19 ASHLEY PEGUERO: Good afternoon, Council Members.

20 My name is Ashley Peguero, and I'm the manager
21 for the Queen's Community Program at the Violence
22 Intervention Program. VIP is the only organization in
23 New York City providing culturally specific services
24 to address domestic and sexual violence in Latinx
25 communities. Our programs serve over 1,700 survivors

1 plus their children yearly impacting over 4,000
2 individuals annually.

3
4 VIP also is a member of The Collective, the only
5 coalition of culturally specific gender justice
6 organizations in New York City that are dedicated to
7 supporting immigrant and BIPOC survivors through
8 policy making efforts to address gender based
9 violence.

10 The individuals we serve are mainly single
11 mothers of color, many having two or more children or
12 an annual income less than \$15,000. More than 70% of
13 our survivors are ineligible for governmental relief
14 programs or subsidies due to their status.

15 Immigrant survivors served by VIP face extremely
16 low wages. They live in overcrowded apartments due to
17 the high cost of living. They're exposed to worsened
18 health outcomes due to lack of healthcare access.

19 Immigrant survivors face greater risk of violence and
20 isolation out of fear they may be retaliated against
21 due to their legal status.

22 Perhaps one of the most difficult obstacles they
23 face is the risk of deportation, especially since
24 there is little to no legal representation they can
25 afford. Families are living in a constant state of

1
2 anxiety that something terrible will happen to them
3 and their families.

4 Many survivors have escaped their countries from
5 an abusive partner, a family member, or authorities
6 where they found no justice. Often they find
7 themselves in a city with many promises that fall
8 short, looping them back into a cycle of trauma,
9 uncertainty, and feeling less than human.

10 One of our clients is Anna, a 42-year-old
11 survivor from Ecuador. Since leaving her abusive
12 husband, Anna has spent significant time seeking
13 employment. However, she's always faced with
14 discrimination and ridicule. On one occasion, a
15 retail job offered her \$6 an hour part time, which is
16 impossible to support two young children with. Anna
17 struggled for years to find legal support because she
18 cannot (TIMER CHIMES) afford it... she cannot afford
19 it and many legal aid clinics do not have the
20 capacity for additional clients.

21 I urge this committee to champion stronger
22 protections for immigrant survivors of gender based
23 violence. It's critical for the Council to preserve
24 that New York city remain a Sanctuary City, push for
25 expanding legal aid, and clear pathways to

1
2 citizenship. These crucial steps empower survivors
3 and their children to break free from abuse. Thank
4 you for your consideration.

5 TAINA WAGNAC: Bonswa, Chair Avilés, thank you so
6 much for your commitment and dedication to immigrant
7 New Yorkers.

8 My name is Taina Wagnac, I am the Senior Manager
9 of State and Local Policy at the New York Immigration
10 Coalition, which is an umbrella policy and advocacy
11 organization for more than 200 groups serving
12 immigrants and refugees.

13 Thank you for the opportunity to, testify today.
14 Myself, along with my colleagues and everyday New
15 Yorkers are here to urge this council to act
16 decisively and boldly in the face of hatred and to
17 not be intimidated by any scare tactics from the
18 right wing. You are not alone. We stand here with
19 you.

20 Simply put, when immigrant New Yorkers,
21 especially those from communities of colors, cannot
22 trust city... that city agencies will act in their
23 best interest, then no community is safe. And we've
24 seen this before with the Black, African, and
25 Caribbean communities who go through constant

1
2 surveillance and harassment from NYPD as well as the
3 LGBTQIA community who face constant erasure and
4 denial of the basic human rights. And so we know this
5 story. We know when one community is denied their
6 right, then we are all impacted.

7 Governor Hochul talks about building a New York
8 that is livable, but how can we have public security
9 when immigrant families fear interaction with city
10 agencies because the staff could share the case to
11 ICE or the landlord could report them to ICE. That's
12 not a way to live.

13 So in moments like these where people may feel
14 emboldened to hate and tear down their neighbors, we
15 need strong protection in place. We need strong local
16 policies like Intro 214 to create a private right of
17 action, hold local agencies and law enforce
18 accountable, but also empower New Yorkers to be able
19 to come forward when... who were armed by these
20 violations to seek justice and not hide. And also
21 continue key investment for programs like Promise
22 NYC, Access Health, and also the Language Justice
23 Worker Owned Cooperative in the Interpreter Bank.

24 We also call on Governor Hochul to pass key
25 legislation like the Access to Representation and New

1
2 York for All to ensure universal access to legal
3 representation for immigrants that includes critical
4 gaps in safety to ensure support for all New Yorkers
5 - and also invest a \$165 million in the State Budget,
6 (TIMER CHIMES) not only for legal service, but also
7 to provide capacity building for legal service
8 providers and also bring much needed financial relief
9 for our immigrant legal attorneys and create an
10 accreditation program to recruit - and hire
11 additional legal teams to make sure that everyone has
12 access to legal representation.

13 Thank you again for your time and the work that
14 you do.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Taina, I thought you were
16 going to pass out there.

17 (LAUGHTER)

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Very impressive, very
19 impressive. Uhm, no, thank you, thank you to this
20 panel. Thank you for the work that you do. We are in
21 solidarity with you all.

22 I am going to call the next panel: Jade Vasquez,
23 Alison Wilkey, Juan Diaz, Alexandra from Afghans for
24 a Better Tomorrow, Manuela Osorio, and Sophie
25 Dalsimer.

1
2 (PAUSE)

3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I think we have... Okay,
4 everyone. Again, thank you for your patience and your
5 stamina.

6 (LAUGHTER)

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Sophie, uh, if you would like
8 to start?

9 SOPHIE DALSIMER: Okay, thank you so much, and my
10 apologies to the Council and my fellow panel members
11 that I do have to head out right after for a prior
12 commitment.

13 Good afternoon, My name is Sophie Dalsimer and I
14 am Co-Director of the Health Justice Program at New
15 York Lawyers for the Public Interest.

16 Our Health Justice Program brings a racial equity
17 and immigrant justice focus to health care advocacy,
18 including addressing the human rights crisis and
19 immigration detention and advocating for health care
20 for all New Yorkers.

21 I am testifying today from a health justice lens
22 to urge the Council to pass legislation that will
23 uphold and strengthen existing laws to protect non
24 citizen community members from ICE enforcement.

25

1
2 These actions are critical to preserving access
3 to health care for all New Yorkers. When immigrant
4 New Yorkers lack confidence that that city agencies
5 and their representatives won't communicate and
6 collude with ICE, they hesitate to access health
7 care. These fears are compounded when ICE shows up in
8 local hospitals.

9 This chilling effect was well documented during
10 the first Trump Administration. Medical providers
11 themselves observed themselves observed that ICE
12 presence in the community led to increased fear of
13 deportation, not only among undocumented immigrants,
14 but also among their U.S. citizen children and
15 networks of families and friends.

16 This pervasive fear led to health care avoidance,
17 stress, and anxiety, all of which have profound
18 effects on physical and mental health.

19 Far from keeping us safe, immigration enforcement
20 has disastrous impacts on the health and well-being
21 of New York City families and communities.

22 As a deportation defense attorney for many years,
23 I know immigration enforcement affects not just
24 recently arrived New Yorkers, but long term New York
25

1
2 City residents with extensive family and community
3 ties.

4 When a noncitizen New Yorker is arrested and
5 detained by ICE, they lose access to health care that
6 they received in their communities. At the same time,
7 their children and other family members frequently
8 experiencing worsening physical and psychological
9 health outcomes with the removal of a primary
10 caretaker or provider.

11 Equally concerning, NYLPI has for years
12 documented the egregious conditions within ICE
13 detention centers (TIMER CHIMES) where many New York
14 City residents have suffered medical neglect and lack
15 of disability accommodations causing severe health
16 consequences and other dignitary harms.

17 Tragically, worsening health outcomes, including
18 preventable deaths due to inadequate medical care,
19 are not exceptional occurrences in ICE detention.

20 The Council must act swiftly to protect New
21 Yorkers from these harms. We urge the Council to pass
22 Intro 214 and the resolutions introduced today to
23 ensure that city employees receive proper training on
24 ICE enforcement guidance and continue to expand legal
25

1
2 services support, including the Immigrant Health
3 Initiative, which supports our vital work.

4 Thank you so much for your time and your
5 continuing cooperation.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you for lifting up the
7 compounding impacts on all of the family members,
8 friends, and community. It has profound consequences,
9 thank you.

10 SOPHIE DALSIMER: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Alison, would you like to go
12 next?

13 ALISON WILKEY: All right, thank you.

14 My name is Alison Wilkey, and I'm the Director of
15 Government Affairs and Strategic Campaigns at the
16 Coalition for the Homeless. Thank you for holding
17 this hearing, Chair Avilés.

18 I'm going focus my testimony on our newest New
19 Yorkers, and particularly those who are still living
20 in shelters.

21 You know, over the past few weeks, the City has
22 made a lot of announcements about closing of new
23 arrival shelters, but the fact remains there are
24 still 50,000 people living in new arrival shelters.
25 And we are still seeing, over recent months, an

1
2 average of four to 500 people newly arriving in the
3 city, seeking sanctuary and shelter and a new life in
4 New York City.

5 And we are happy that the City has moved quickly
6 to close sites that are only housing new arrivals,
7 and particularly the larger facilities for families
8 with children, like Floyd Bennett Field.

9 But we remain very concerned about single adults
10 in these facilities. The City just announced they are
11 opening a facility in the Bronx that will have 2,200
12 beds that will be for single adults, and we're really
13 concerned that that will be a target for deportation
14 efforts of the new administration.

15 It's really imperative that the City continue its
16 efforts so that there are no shelters that are solely
17 new arrivals. And also, the City needs to do more
18 about making sure that all shelters know their
19 obligations under our sanctuary laws, including
20 shelters for DYCD, all the emergency shelters, and
21 the domestic violence shelters.

22 In addition to that, the City needs to do more to
23 make sure that people can move on to permanent
24 housing and move out of shelter. The lack of case
25 management and lack of legal services that many

1
2 people have talked about are dire. In shelters that
3 we have been in, there's one case manager for every
4 200 people - if there is a case manager at all. And
5 those case managers are typically exit planners who
6 do little beyond asking people (TIMER CHIMES) about
7 their plans.

8 The City needs to invest far more in real case
9 management, quality case management, to help people
10 be able to move on and in the legal services that
11 people need.

12 I was glad to hear OASO say that they are doing
13 SIJS applications. That is new. That is not something
14 that they have been... have done in the past, but far
15 more is needed to make sure that people can achieve
16 the stability to move on.

17 And there are more recommendations in my full
18 testimony which you have.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. And thank you for
20 highlighting DYCD in particular. That is another
21 conversation.

22 JUAN DIAZ: Thank you, Chair Avilés.

23 My name is Juan Diaz; I'm a policy associate at
24 Citizen's Committee for Children, a multi-issue

1
2 children organization. We are also co-conveners of
3 the Family Homeless Coalition, FHC.

4 Appointed members of the incoming federal
5 administration, which will take office in less than a
6 week, have openly shared intentions of mass
7 deportations and immigration enforcements nationwide.

8 The impact on recently arrived migrants and mixed
9 status families in New York City will be devastating,
10 especially in New York City, where close to half of
11 the children have at least one immigrant parent.

12 We cannot forget the impact that it will have,
13 not just on immigrants, but on American citizens,
14 right, which impact are everywhere, they're social
15 workers, they are teachers, they have family members
16 that are impacted by deportations.

17 In our written testimony, I will highlight more
18 recommendations, but today, I really want to
19 highlight policies that will support mixed status
20 families and recently arrived migrants, such as
21 implementing and funding the CityFHEPS expansion,
22 which will allow more and more families to relocate
23 and also remain at home to eliminate the 60-day,
24 short term limits for migrant families. Sixty days is
25

1
2 not enough time for case managers to provide
3 resources and exit plans as well.

4 And also for students, our partner organizations,
5 I mentioned that students are missing 60-days and or
6 more migrant students when they're they have to
7 transfer.

8 Additionally, as several partners have mentioned,
9 the need for legal immigration services is huge. So
10 we encourage and we urge the City Council to support
11 more funding for legal defense.

12 Also, enforce translation services requirements
13 at city agencies and also at agencies that have
14 contracts with the City. It is... a recent CCC Report
15 found that immigrants are five times (TIMER CHIMES)
16 less likely to receive health services because of
17 language barriers and this impacts severely.

18 Also, restore and invest in workforce development
19 for migrants so they become can become financially
20 independent.

21 But most... it's also important for City Council
22 to partner with the state government to pass
23 legislation that will have a huge impact on mixed
24 status families. And we also at CCC support
25 resolution 2970, the new... which supports the New

1
2 York for All Act and Resolution 2971, the Access to
3 Representation Act.

4 Chair Avilés, I sympathize with many advocates
5 today and individuals. I'm a formerly undocumented
6 immigrant. I grew up undocumented, I come from
7 Ecuador, and I see all those reports; I'm also a
8 researcher, I teach at Silverman, and I see the
9 students, how fearful they are, and I recognize all
10 those fears and anxieties, especially in low income
11 communities where there's high concentration of
12 poverty, and therefore, it's hugely important for the
13 City Council to support not just funding and
14 legislation, but also to enforce and change the
15 narrative of city agencies, who oftentimes, many
16 immigrants feel isolated because of lack of services
17 and lack of language access. Thank you so much.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, thank you so much
19 for sharing your story and for all of the work that
20 you are doing.

21 JUAN DIAZ: Thank you.

22 MANUELA OSORIO: Thank you.

23 Good afternoon, my name is Manuela Osorio, I'm
24 here today both as a permanent resident seeking
25 citizenship in the United States as well as a digital

1
2 organizer for the National Civil Rights Organization,
3 LatinoJustice PRLDEF. I want to speak to the Council
4 today about the role that New York City plays in the
5 national immigration landscape.

6 For decades, New York City has been a front
7 runner in protecting its immigrant population by
8 limiting interactions between federal immigration
9 authorities and New York City local agency.

10 Today, we have talked about common violations.
11 With the threat of mass deportations from the Trump
12 Administration and the antagonism towards immigrants
13 from Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul, the New York
14 City Council must address the challenges ahead.

15 The Council must pass the resolutions to support
16 the state bills New York for All Act and Access To
17 Representation Act.

18 The Council should also introduce and pass Intro
19 214, which addresses harm that flows from violations
20 of our immigrant protection laws.

21 To speak to the national perspective, years of
22 unjust and racist federal immigration policies have
23 created massive challenges for progressive local
24 governments. The current U.S. border policies have
25 resulted in cruel and predatory practices against

1
2 thousands of people who have endured immense
3 struggles to secure a better life for themselves and
4 for their families.

5 We can expect that the Trump Administration will
6 expand collaboration with the anti-immigrant
7 administrations of Greg Abbott in Texas and
8 Republican state lawmakers in border states like
9 Arizona, New Mexico and Florida.

10 That means that New York must strongly push back
11 against the anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies
12 sweeping our country.

13 At LatinoJustice, we're advocating against
14 hateful anti-immigration policies in the south,
15 especially in Texas and Florida.

16 Other states look to New York to see what we are
17 doing for progressive policies. New York State, a
18 Democratic trifecta, and the city of New York have to
19 continue being accountable and hold their obligations
20 to all members of its constituency, because here we
21 have real opportunities for pro immigrant policies.

22 (TIMER CHIMES) The failure of Congress and past
23 presidents to create a humane and inclusive
24 immigration system has galvanized us now to fight
25

1
2 hard to make sure all New Yorkers have a viable path
3 to live, work, build a family, and stay in New York.

4 We will not abandon our neighbors. We can and we
5 will build a future where all of us can live healthy
6 and dignified lives in this city and this country.

7 Thank you.

8 JADE VASQUEZ: Good afternoon, thank you, Chair
9 Avilés, for holding this hearing on protecting
10 immigrant communities from the harmful policies of
11 the incoming Trump Administration and for the
12 opportunity to testify.

13 My name is Jade Vasquez, and I am the Director Of
14 Policy and Research at WIN, the largest provider of
15 shelter and supportive housing for families with
16 children in New York City and in the nation.

17 We operate 16 shelters and nearly 500 supportive
18 housing units across the five boroughs. Each night,
19 nearly 7,000 people call WIN home, including 3,600
20 children.

21 A significant portion of WIN's households are led
22 by immigrants, including mixed-status families,
23 recent arrivals legally seeking asylum, and
24 undocumented families.

1
2 Last week, WIN released Project Hope, a report
3 outlining administrative and legislative actions that
4 New York City and state lawmakers can take to protect
5 low income, homeless, and immigrant New Yorkers from
6 the draconian policies laid out in Project 2025.

7 Project 2025, published by the conservative think
8 tank, The Heritage Foundation, proposes extreme
9 immigration policies, including mass deportations and
10 cutting federal funding to sanctuary cities.

11 If implemented, the policies of Project 2025
12 could lead to the deportation and family separation
13 for tens of thousands of New Yorkers, as well as the
14 loss of crucial public benefits for immigrant
15 communities.

16 To resist Project 2025's violent anti humanizing
17 immigration policies that will disproportionately
18 impact low income and homeless New Yorkers, we urge
19 this Council to take the following actions:

20 First, strengthen the city sanctuary laws to
21 protect immigrant New Yorkers by passing Council
22 Member Powers' Intro 396 and Intro 395 to limit DOC
23 and NYPD communication with ICE, and passing Council
24 Member Hanif's Intro 214 to create a private right of
25 action for violations of the City's detainer laws.

1
2 Second, develop and enforce data security
3 measures for shelter and social service providers to
4 protect sensitive information on homeless immigrants.

5 The City has collected a lot of information
6 (TIMER CHIMES) on our newest arrivals, which, given
7 Trump's mass deportation plans, now poses a dangerous
8 liability. The City must take immediate action to
9 fully secure the data collected.

10 Third, increase funding for immigration legal
11 services to at least \$80 million to meet the growing
12 demand and support nonprofit legal service providers.

13 As a shelter provider who launched our own legal
14 service initiative, we know firsthand the positive
15 impacts that immigration legal services has in
16 helping our immigrant clients obtain status,
17 employment, and permanent housing.

18 As a Sanctuary City, NYC lawmakers have the
19 ability and a moral obligation to protect homeless
20 immigrant New Yorkers from some of the most harmful
21 proposals of Project 2025 and the incoming Trump
22 Administration.

23 By implementing the proposals of Project Hope,
24 the City Council will also help our newest survivors
25 regain their independence, thrive in permanent

1
2 housing, and build a brighter future for their
3 children. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much, and thanks
5 to WIN for all of the work they do for New Yorkers.

6 Did we have... We are going to move to the next
7 panel. But I did call (BACKGROUND NOISE) Alexandra...

8 ALEXANDRA MILLATMAL: Yes, I am here virtually.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Ah! Okay. Alexandra, would
10 you like to go next, and then I will call the next
11 panel.

12 ALEXANDRA MILLATMAL: Yes, thank you.

13 Thank you for the option to join in virtually. I
14 was there earlier, but had to be pulled away for
15 another obligation.

16 Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity
17 to testify, my name is Alexandra Millatmal, and I am
18 a daughter of immigrants from Afghanistan and
19 Germany. And I am also a community organizer with
20 Afghans for A Better Tomorrow, an Afghan led advocacy
21 organization.

22 I'm here to strongly urge the City Council and
23 the city of New York not only to oppose the cruel
24 policies proposed by President Trump to target,
25 detain, and deport people seeking asylum in the

1
2 United States, but to affirm and support the
3 resolutions put forth by Chair Avilés and others.

4 Since 2023, we have supported nearly 1,200
5 Afghans and other asylum seekers in the city. Our
6 community members have fled famine, brutal
7 persecution, and climate devastation, conditions all
8 created or worsened by U.S. policies.

9 These families are humble and kind. They look out
10 for and help one another and have had little rest
11 from doing so even after arriving to relative safety.
12 Now they face and fear the threat of a Trump
13 Administration.

14 One mother of two, who legally prosecuted members
15 of the Taliban back in Afghanistan said, "My family
16 and I are hopeful that the city of New York will use
17 any and all measures to protect and defend us from
18 any potential harm. We deserve dignity, respect, and
19 a chance to live in safety and security in this
20 country."

21 Today, I speak on behalf of our community and
22 organization to urge the City not to cooperate with
23 federal immigration enforcement whatsoever.

24 Furthermore, immediate passage of the Access to
25 Representation Act and the New York for All Act are

1
2 crucial in ensuring that newly arrived Afghans can
3 find a pathway to safety and permanent legal status
4 in this country.

5 The folks we assist are part of New York City's
6 fabric. They are translators, people who deliver and
7 prepare your food, servers, students. (TIMER CHIMES)
8 In our community... (CROSS-TALK)

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired, thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: You can finish up. You can
12 finish up, yeah, sorry.

13 ALEXANDRA MILLATMAL: Thank you, no, thank you, I
14 appreciate it.

15 In our community, those who came to the U.S. just
16 12 months ago are the ones that are helping those who
17 arrived a few weeks ago. I urge the mayor and city
18 council to reject the fascist and racist plans of
19 mass detention and deportation heralded by the
20 incoming administration.

21 Afghans who seek safety in the country that
22 helped displace them deserve freedom and legal
23 protection, not to have to again live in fear of a
24 brutal police force looking to separate their
25

1
2 families, replicating the repression they left in
3 Afghanistan. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

5 And for the next panel, we will have Carina
6 Kaufman, Isis Mireles, Muhammad Atieh (phonetic),
7 Marlene Ensaldo, and Ahmed Mourad.

8 (PAUSE)

9 CARINA KAUFMAN-GUTIERREZ: Good afternoon, Chair
10 Avilés, thank you for the opportunity to testify
11 today. My name is Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez, and I'm
12 the Deputy Director at the Street Vendor Project.

13 I wanted to share about a call I received on New
14 Year's Day from a vendor who called crying because
15 she'd been selling hats and glasses for New Year's
16 the night before when an NYPD officer stopped her and
17 asked for her vendor license. She didn't have one
18 through no fault of her own, and the officer gave her
19 a ticket. A family member of hers who was there to
20 film the interaction with the NYPD, which they have
21 the right to do, and the officer got upset at how the
22 vendor was having a conversation with the family
23 member, decided to put the vendor in handcuffs and
24 bring her back to the station, to the precinct, where
25 she was issued a criminal summons for vending without

1
2 a license, which can be prosecuted as a misdemeanor
3 charge, and she was also charged with disorderly
4 conduct for having a conversation with her family
5 member.

6 This vendor is undocumented, she is terrified
7 that when she goes to criminal court on January 21st,
8 the day after Trump takes office, that she won't make
9 it home to her family, that she will be picked up by
10 ICE or get a criminal record.

11 This type of interaction happened because city
12 government for too long has failed our city's
13 smallest businesses and has allowed vendors to be
14 caught up in a system like this which is designed to
15 fail.

16 This particular vendor was caught up in one of
17 our mayor's ongoing Quality of Life Operations,
18 showing just how real it is that these harsh
19 enforcement actions can quickly ensnare vendors and
20 have much more drastic consequences.

21 Of note is that the Department of Sanitation, the
22 lead vendor enforcement agency, has publicly stated
23 in front of this Council in this very room that they
24 will not issue criminal summonses.

1
2 However, the NYPD with the same commissioner now,
3 is playing an outsized role in vending enforcement
4 and does routinely issue criminal summonses.

5 In the last year, in 2024, criminal summonses to
6 street vendors has skyrocketed. In the first three-
7 quarters of 2024, NYPD surpassed the number of
8 criminal (TIMER CHIMES) summonses issued to street
9 vendors, that were issued in all of 2023.

10 There were 1,244 criminal summonses in 2023 as a
11 whole, and in just the first three- quarters of 2024,
12 over 1,500 have were issued.

13 This inconsistency in policy is not just poor
14 management of the city's operations. It's dangerous.

15 And just to close, that we are... there's action
16 that City Council can take to change this. We do not
17 have to wait for the mayor because it's not gonna
18 happen.

19 This city council has legislation before you, the
20 Street Vendor Reform Package, which will protect New
21 York City's immigrant communities, will improve the
22 safety of goods sold, and increase compliance in our
23 sidewalks, raising tax and revenue fees for the City
24 during this fiscally time... fiscal time. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

1
2 ISIS MIRELES: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Gracias, Isis.

4 TRANSLATOR: Now I will translate her testimony.

5 Hello, my name is Isis Mireles. I'm Mexican, I
6 came to the United States in the year 1999 as an
7 immigrant with the desire to study. But there was in
8 place a barrier that didn't allow me to do so for the
9 lack of legal documents. This hurt my feelings. I
10 felt sad to see how citizens were able to advance,
11 and I was left seeing them progress. I felt alone and
12 without hope.

13 My biggest desire was to be a lawyer. In 2018, I
14 got my citizenship. And today, it is my goal to
15 obtain a GED. Many years have passed, and maybe
16 today, I am not what I desired to be before. But
17 still lives in me the hope to get an office (TIMER
18 CHIMES) job as a secretary.

19 I'm attending a Food Vendors Organization to be
20 able to obtain the opportunity of a license as a
21 street vendor. But, even though I'm a citizen, I
22 still have to face the great barrier of the
23 opposition against opportunity.

24 And I feel frustrated just like the people, who,
25 and I understand their frustration, their frustration

1
2 too. Today, I represent food vendors in the support
3 of the immigrant community so the rights are
4 respected in the country of liberty for their own
5 good and their families. It is not nice to see how
6 they persecute them and how they attack them,
7 violating their rights as if they were criminals.

8 As immigrants, we just want to work and provide
9 for our families. We don't want criminals with
10 license plates. Let them live. Let them work. They
11 also pay taxes. Let's protect them. Immigrants count
12 too.

13 We want for the street vendors reform to be
14 approved and also for immigration reform to be
15 approved. We don't want criminals with license
16 plates. We want a solution. We want positive action.
17 We don't want just fairy tales. And we want better
18 training for officers so they can respect the rights
19 of immigrants.

20 Thank you for your attention, for your time, and
21 thank you for your patience.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

23 ISIS MIRELES: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

25 ISIS MIRELES: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

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2 MARLENE ANSALDO: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 TRANSLATOR: My name is Marlene Ansaldo, and I'm a
4 street vendor. I've been doing it for 21 years, and I
5 just want to ask the authorities, the council
6 members, the politicians to help us with licenses and
7 permits to stop the harassment of the authorities of
8 Sanitation, the police, this has become a massive
9 harassment against street vendors.

10 We just ask you to let us work. We don't want
11 anything for free. We just want to work in peace.

12 This has become a constant harassment with the
13 authorities, Sanitation, and officers. Please, we
14 just want to work in peace and to stop the harassment
15 from Sanitation, because they take our merchandise
16 and they throw it in the garbage, and they give us
17 tickets from two to \$3,000. That's a lot of money.

18 Thank you very much to all of you, and we want
19 you to help us stop the harassment from Sanitation
20 and the police. Blessings to all of you.

21 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

22 TRANSLATOR: I appreciate your patience for
23 listening to all of us. Thanks, and I really thank
24 you for that.

25 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

1 TRANSLATOR: My name is Ahmed Murad...

2 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 TRANSLATOR: And I have been a street vendor since
4 20212.

5 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

6 TRANSLATOR: But I was obliged to wait for 11
7 years to take this permit to work in the street.

8 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 TRANSLATOR: As for us, as immigrants...

10 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 TRANSLATOR: The work is not like a way to sustain
12 our life...

13 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

14 TRANSLATOR: But it is a way to keep our dignity.

15 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

16 TRANSLATOR: And sustain our families.

17 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

18 TRANSLATOR: Most city vendors are immigrants who
19 have come to this city looking for a better life.

20 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

21 TRANSLATOR: And they make significant
22 contributions, not just to the local economy, but
23 also to social textures of the city. Despite this, on
24 a daily basis, we face challenges and dangers to
25

1
2 safety and livelihood. And also, there is increase in
3 the taxes since 2022 by 71%.

4 AHMED MURAD: Not taxes, the tickets...

5 TRANSLATOR: Oh, the tickets?

6 AHMED MURAD: Yeah.

7 TRANSLATOR: Okay, it is not the taxes, sorry, it
8 is the tickets.

9 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

10 TRANSLATOR: Many of us live in constant fear with
11 the police...

12 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 TRANSLATOR: And many of them, they deal in a
14 harsh way with the street vendors.

15 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

16 TRANSLATOR: A lot of times they raid a lot of
17 city vendors.

18 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

19 TRANSLATOR: And...

20 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

21 TRANSLATOR: And their fears were increased....
22 Are increased with Trump coming to the
23 administration.

24 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

25

1
2 TRANSLATOR: In addition to the difficulties that
3 we struggle with the ordinary police...

4 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

5 TRANSLATOR: And the fear of the street vendors
6 from the immigration police...

7 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 TRANSLATOR: Because a lot of street vendors fear
9 the immigration police, because that affects their
10 work...

11 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 TRANSLATOR: And consequences of the police is
13 much more severe than...

14 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 TRANSLATOR: And...

16 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

17 TRANSLATOR: And because that may affect their
18 future and the future of their children...

19 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE) (TIMER
20 CHIMES)

21 TRANSLATOR: Because most street vendors, they
22 don't have, like, a permit, so we want you to help
23 them to get them permits in order not to get... be
24 affected from the police.

25 AHMED MURAD: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

1
2 TRANSLATOR: Thank you, very much, again.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Shoukran...

4 TRANSLATOR: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I want to thank this panel
6 for both lifting up a current condition. Right? Most
7 of the conversation is anticipating the future. And
8 we have a current condition that we need to address,
9 of which there are proposals on the table.

10 So I want to acknowledge that that is here and
11 that is what is being requested, and that can begin
12 to change the dynamic.

13 So it's a double challenge that you all are
14 facing as the smallest businesses on the curb where
15 you have no structure to protect you. So we're gonna
16 continue to work at it.

17 But thank you for your patience and spending all
18 the hours here because I know you were all here this
19 morning too.

20 AHMED MURAD: Yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

22 AHMED MURAD: You're welcome.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Gracias.

24 (PAUSE)

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: The next panel, Nathan Gargen
3 (phonetic) Cynthia Katz, Kevin Lee, Lisha Luo Cai, an
4 we will call Muhammad Atieh (phonetic) again, and I
5 know (INAUDIBLE).

6 (PAUSE)

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay, we are nearing the
8 greatest and the most patient panelists of the entire
9 day. Thank you, and I guess if you would like to
10 start?

11 CYNTHIA KATZ: Thank you. Thank you Chairwoman
12 Avilés. Unfortunately, my colleague, Nathan Gargan,
13 did have to leave, but I am here.

14 My name is Cynthia Katz, thank you again. I am
15 the Managing Attorney at HIAS. HIAS has been in New
16 York probably from near the start of immigration or
17 at least in modern record.

18 We were founded over 100 years ago to help Jews
19 fleeing pogroms in Europe. Today, HIAS stands for a
20 world in which refugees and asylum seekers of all
21 faiths find welcome here in New York City, as well as
22 throughout our offices in the DC area, as well as in
23 the rest of the world.

24 We are in favor of the proposed legislation. We
25 do participate - yesterday, I was at D3, Open Arms

1 Meeting, for example, and got a chance to hear, not
2 only as a legal service provider, which is what I am,
3 and greatly impacted, but I want to, first of all,
4 thank you for your ongoing support and your
5 commitment to helping the lives of New Yorkers who
6 are the most vulnerable of New Yorkers.
7

8 We represent people who are petrified. As many
9 people have already testified today, our clients are
10 scared, we are scared, and we are all, as I'm sure
11 you can relate to, we are tired.

12 We ask for your ongoing help, and we ask how can
13 we help you to fight the good fight, the right side
14 of this equation, to face down the xenophobes, and to
15 provide that steady and supportive compass that you
16 have already shown so many New Yorkers.

17 With that said, please, please call out to us if
18 we can provide any assistance, because the
19 consequences as you know are dire. Thank you so much.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

21 LISHA LUO CAI: How exciting.

22 Thank you, Chair Avilés and the Committee On
23 Immigration for holding this hearing.

24 I'm Lisha Luo Cai Advocacy Coordinator at the
25 Asian American Federation, where we proudly represent

1
2 the collective voice of more than 70 member
3 nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

4 We encourage City Council and the mayoral
5 administration to strengthen the city's protection
6 for immigrant communities. To paint a picture because
7 we all love data... So to paint a picture, because we
8 all love data, the majority of Asian New Yorkers are
9 immigrants with two out of three in the city being
10 foreign born. Our newest neighbors who seek asylum
11 rely on our city as a sanctuary. And of the 170,000
12 migrant neighbors that have arrived since 2022, about
13 22,000 are of Chinese descent and 80,000 are of in of
14 Indian descent.

15 With the growing anti-Asian sentiment alongside a
16 president-elect that has vowed to crack down on
17 immigration policy and amplify mass deportation, the
18 city and the state need to work together to ensure
19 these protections are strengthened.

20 With the immense work that lies ahead, and in
21 order to protect our immigrant communities, AF
22 recommends that City Council and mayoral
23 administration to, one, call on the state to
24 reintroduce and pass the New York for All Act and
25 Access to Representation.

1
2 Immigrants shouldn't be burdened with the fear
3 that the sensitive information they entrusted to
4 government and local agencies may be used to their
5 detriment. Many of our community members often
6 express apprehension when seeking services from
7 government and local agencies. And if immigration
8 protections are threatened, we'll begin to see an
9 increase of community members losing their trust in
10 government, which is what we don't want, and also
11 disenrolling from public benefits out of fear.

12 We've already seen it happen in 2019 when Asian
13 noncitizens disenrolled from public benefit programs
14 like SNAP at a rate higher than Asian citizens due to
15 fear, technically due to public charge rule.

16 The negative impacts of public charge remain to
17 be seen even today as Asian New Yorkers have
18 reenrolled (TIMER CHIMES) at a much lower rate than
19 other communities.

20 Number two, to pass Intro 214 to ensure
21 government agencies are held accountable when they
22 break the law.

23 Three, continue to support and fund language
24 access work in the city through language worker
25 cooperatives and the interpreter bank, and lastly, to

1
2 support and invest in our community based
3 organizations.

4 The presence of our newest neighbors have
5 magnified the importance of our CEOs, because access
6 to critical immigration legal services for Asian New
7 Yorkers has actually been near impossible to meet the
8 need, uh, putting those who have limited English
9 proficiency, financial means, and may have uncertain
10 immigration status at a risk of being stuck in a
11 cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

12 And just to give a example and to close-up my
13 statement, our member organizations in Sunset Park,
14 for instance, host monthly legal clinics to assist
15 with a multitude of immigration legal needs. But due
16 to the lack of capacity and funding from the City,
17 they're unable to meet the increased demands for this
18 much needed resource.

19 As such, many of our Asian immigrant... Asian
20 migrant neighbors in Sunset Park, and in the rest of
21 the city, are often lost to the system languishing
22 from the lack of timely resources and immigration
23 assistance.

24 That really needs to change, especially now more
25 than ever. AF is grateful to see City Council move

1
2 ahead with policies that protect our immigrant
3 communities, and we thank you and look forward to
4 continuing to working with you.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much, Lisha, and
6 I know you were early in the morning as well. I just
7 want to acknowledge the work of the Asian American
8 Federation that you have been doing all throughout
9 the city for a very, very long time. We have an
10 enormous amount of work to do. And I think what we
11 see today is that every community is impacted. And
12 every community is uncertain and facing fear. And our
13 collective ability to be together is really
14 important. So I just want to thank you for your
15 partnership and your ongoing work.

16 LISHA LUO CAI: And thank you for your advocacy
17 and for caring about immigrants.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

19 Kevin?

20 KEVIN LEE: I'm Kevin Lee with the REVCORP CORPS
21 for the Emancipation of Humanity and Revolution Books
22 in Harlem. And I'm here to speak to you today from
23 the heart about this condition and problems of
24 thousands of our immigrant sisters and brothers here
25 in New York, and literally millions more who are

1
2 across the country. These are people who are forced
3 to flee their countries because of wars, economic
4 devastation, climate disaster caused by the very
5 system of capitalism, imperialism of which the United
6 States is the main purveyor in the world.

7 When the Eric... when Eric "Pig" Adams says he is
8 excited to work with border Nazi Thomas Homen and the
9 fascist Donald Trump, he is joining up with these
10 deranged fascist lunatics that are dehumanizing and
11 demonizing the human beings as rapists and criminals
12 and what he calls from "shithole" countries. I'm just
13 being blunt here and frank. Telling... they're
14 telling bold faced lies, accusing people of stealing
15 and eating American pets. They blame immigrants for
16 every problem the system creates here in the United
17 States from, you heard some of it here today, from
18 inflation to the rotten schools and hospitals. And
19 straight out of Hitler's playbook, he spits out the
20 racist lie that immigrants are poisoning the blood of
21 our country. People are being rounded up now. They're
22 being rounded up, down, shipped out, over and around,
23 demonized, terrorized.

24

25

1
2 None of this is necessary. In a city that was
3 literally built on the graves of enslaved people,
4 this is a disgrace.

5 In a city with more empty offices, apartments,
6 and buildings than our homeless people and immigrants
7 combined, this is a shame.

8 In a country that was built on the enslavement of
9 captured African people, the genocide of the native
10 people, and the theft of Mexico through war, this is
11 an insult to oppressed people and decent (TIMER
12 CHIMES) people here and everywhere in the world.

13 And I'm here to tell you that it is your right,
14 your responsibility, and your duty to defend the
15 rights and the very lives of the immigrants that the
16 Trump MAGA fascists are targeting right now.

17 And we in the REVCOM CORPS will do this
18 ourselves. We plan to do that. We're calling on all
19 the decent human beings to join us in doing this.

20 And to anyone telling us to go along with this
21 cruel, unacceptable madness, like Eric Adams, I will
22 quote revolutionary leader Bob Avakian who says,
23 "This is not a time for accepting this Trump MAGA
24 fascism as legitimate. This is a time for collective
25 action and self sacrificing struggle for the greater

1 good, the greater good of defeating this fascism.
2 There is no good reason why the world has to be the
3 way it is. A whole different way of living is
4 possible. A whole different way to organize society
5 with a radically different economic foundation and
6 political system, emancipating relations among the
7 people, and an uplifting culture. All of this is
8 oriented to meeting the basic needs and fulfilling
9 the highest interest of the masses of people. In the
10 name of humanity, we refuse to accept a fascist
11 America. The whole system is rotten and illegitimate.
12 We need and we demand a whole new way to live in a
13 fundamentally different system.”

14 And there are two things I'll leave you with,
15 everyone who hates everything the Trump MAGA fascism
16 stands for must do: One is to dig into the *Real Time*
17 *Guidance For Revolution* by Bob Avakian he's giving in
18 his social media, messages @BobAvakianofficial.

19 And two, join us in taking to the streets on
20 January 20th in DC and beyond in defiant protests
21 with the aim of stopping this fascism now. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Quite frankly I'd
23 love to finish the hearing right on that. I...

24 KEVIN LEE: Okay (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Gracias, thank you, thank you
3 for that. Thank you, again, for all of the work you
4 are doing. And we will continue to fight for our
5 people, for all of us.

6 KEVIN LEE: I vote for that.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

8 So our next... Our next panel is Oscar V,
9 Jonathan Lam, Kamara Kahn, Gustav, Kerry Ann Pauls,
10 and Raul Rivera.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We want to remind people that
12 there is no audio or video recording at the witness
13 table.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yes, and as a reminder, there
15 is no audio or video recording at the witness table
16 while anyone is testifying.

17 I will make the call again just very quickly.
18 Raul Rivera, Kerry Ann Pauls, Gustav, Kamara,
19 Jonathan Lam, and Oscar V.

20 (PAUSE)

21 RAUL RIVERA: Good afternoon, My name is, Raul
22 Rivera, I'm a TLC driver and a TLC driver advocate.
23 I'm a native New Yorker. And, for the record, we
24 don't have anything personal against, the chair. Also
25 for the record, in my family, we have children that

1
2 are half Dominican, half Puerto Rican. I have a
3 nephew that's, his mother comes from Peru. When I was
4 23 years old, I lost a child. Her mother was from El
5 Salvador, just for the record.

6 We say legal migration, no discrimination, and
7 justice for all. We also want to say congratulations
8 to the new incoming ICE director, Tom Homen. We want
9 mister Homen to receive this message. If this
10 committee and if this city council cannot follow the
11 constitution, we ask that anyone that gets in his way
12 to be arrested. He said he will do so himself. So if
13 this chair violates the constitution, Chair, if you
14 violate the law, we ask that he lock you up. We also
15 ask that he investigate any legislation that you
16 approve or pass in this city council. I don't believe
17 you are a councilman that that can be trusted. You're
18 a councilman that cannot be trusted. Any legislation,
19 I repeat, any legislation that you try to pass in
20 this city council must be investigated. And we're
21 gonna get this message over to Tom Homen. And we also
22 challenge you right now, if you dare, if you dare to
23 say close the border, do you... can you say that,
24 Chair? Can you say close the border?

1
2 Do you know that if you have a country without
3 borders, you don't have a country? Even if it's a
4 communist country, you don't have a country. That's
5 what makes a country - borders. It's people and
6 borders. All right. We demand safety for the New
7 Yorker and all citizens of this country. We don't
8 preach hate. We see all the gaslighting that's
9 happening here, all these, nonprofits that show up.
10 Can you say close the border? (TIMER CHIMES) Can you
11 say you love America? Can you say you love America?
12 You see?

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Mr. Rivera, your
14 time is up... (CROSS-TALK)

15 RAUL RIVERA: Because you are a traitor. That's
16 why you can't say it.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And we're moving to the
18 next... (CROSS-TALK)

19 RAUL RIVERA: You are a traitor. That's why you
20 can't say I love America.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: testimony. Thank you very
22 much.

23 Next we will go to the online panelists.

24 RAUL RIVERA: (YELLING)

25 (PAUSE)

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And now we will turn to the
3 virtual panelists. For virtual panelists, once your
4 name is called, a member of our staff will unmute
5 you, and the Sergeant at Arms will set the timer to
6 give you the go ahead to begin. Please wait for the
7 Sergeant to announce that you may begin before
8 delivering your testimony.

9 And now I will call our first virtual panelist,
10 Maggie Sanchez?

11 RAUL RIVERA: (YELLING)

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Maggie are you online?

13 RAUL RIVERA: (YELLING)

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Feel free to unmute, and you
16 can start.

17 MAGGIE SANCHEZ: Hi, everyone, my name is Maggie
18 Sanchez. I'm speaking here in my personal capacity. I
19 am a Public Advocate Appointee to the Citywide
20 Council on Special Education.

21 Cruelty is the point. And, unfortunately,
22 (INAUDIBLE) two through six, the from the NYC Charter
23 Amendment proposals were passed this last election in
24 November, which granted even more powers to the
25

1
2 current mayor and to any mayor in the future,
3 including the Department of Sanitation and the NYPD.

4 It also gives less NYC Council oversight and the
5 and impedes the Council's ability to protect New
6 Yorkers when it comes to harmful policies impacting
7 outside vendors and undocumented immigrants.

8 This is the reality and unfortunately it passed.
9 I am asking the New York City Council to push for the
10 New York for All Act to strengthen New York City
11 detainer laws, pass the Intro to 214, push for Access
12 for All, expand NYIFUP funding, call state... call
13 the State Legislature to pass the Youth Justice and
14 Opportunities Act, fund Know Your Rights trainings
15 with equitable language access, and please pass
16 street vendor reform package.

17 An example of what families are already going
18 through, here's one example of the fear and the
19 discrimination and racism that that undocumented
20 families are going through. A school district
21 representative told a parent they had to wait until
22 the Trump Administration, because the City will be
23 trying to save money (TIMER CHIMES)...

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired, thank
25 you.

1 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: If you can finish up...

2 MAGGIE SANCHEZ: I'll wrap it up.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Ms. Sanchez, thank you, go
4 ahead.

5 MAGGIE SANCHEZ: (NO RESPONSE)

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Go ahead, Miss Sanchez...

7 MAGGIE SANCHEZ: When they tried to...

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Oh, I'm sorry for the delay,
9 go ahead.

10
11 MAGGIE SANCHEZ: When parent asked about services
12 for their severely, severely disabled student, this
13 is a newly arrived family, and birthright citizenship
14 was brought up by a New York City DOE district
15 representative in Queens. So this is one of the
16 examples, as many others, that is happening to,
17 students with disabilities, in newly arrived students
18 with disabilities and their families.

19 Please protect them. We need to stay together and
20 hold the New York City Mayor accountable.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much, Ms.
22 Sanchez.

23 Next we are going to have Jonathan Lam.

24 JONATHAN LAM: Yes, hello. Okay.

25

1
2 Good morning, or good afternoon now, my name is
3 Jonathan Lam, and I am the Community Organizing
4 Coordinator for New York's Refugee and Migrants
5 Rights Task Force.

6 Nearly, 50 years ago, my parents fled to Vietnam
7 War during the 1970s. They share stories of their
8 horrifying experiences, uh, witnessing violence,
9 bombings, and spending days at sea in a boat, facing
10 threats from pirates, and enduring life in a refugee
11 camp on Bidong Island in Malaysia. My father lost his
12 own dad during the war. Their stories of
13 displacement, resilience, and survival is not unique,
14 and it reflects the struggles of millions of migrants
15 and refugees around the world.

16 Today, we have over 117 million people globally,
17 being forced to flee their homes due to war,
18 violence, and devastating effects of climate change.

19 In New York City, we are seeing a growing influx
20 of migrants seeking safety and stability, yet instead
21 of investing into housing, education, and services to
22 support these individuals, we are seeing a growing
23 amount of antiimmigrant rhetoric.

24 I stand before you today to remind us all that
25 immigrants are the backbone of our communities.

1
2 Immigrants keep our economy running during a
3 pandemic. They are our small business owners, street
4 vendors owners, and teachers.

5 I urge this council to take meaningful action to
6 protect migrants and refugees in New York and reject
7 Trump's mass deportation and antiimmigrant agenda.

8 Last year, Amnesty International released a human
9 rights blueprint, a framework that outlines key
10 research and recommendations to help both local and
11 national leaders in addressing immigration and the
12 over militarization at our U.S. (INAUDIBLE) border.

13 In October, we organized and mobilized over 70
14 New Yorkers to attend a regional activism conference
15 here in New York City and organize around the
16 Destination Reception Assistance Act on a federal
17 level, which would improve our resettlement programs
18 to properly support newly arrived asylum seekers.

19 We need to ensure a humane response to the needs
20 of arriving migrants, invest into immigrant services,
21 (TIMER CHIMES) affordable housing, and... (CROSS-
22 TALK)

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your testimony,
24 your time has expired.

25 JONATHAN LAM: Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much.

2 Next we will have Darnell Benoit.

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

4 DARNELL BENOIT: Hello, thank you, finally, I'm
5 happy to be here. I was there in person, but,
6 unfortunately, I couldn't stay. I had another
7 engagement.
8

9 But, hello, members of the of the New York City,
10 Council, and thank you so much for the opportunity to
11 address the critical issues that impact the future of
12 our city, the safety and well-being of immigrant
13 students in New York City Public Schools.

14 My name is Darnell Benoit from Flanbwayan Haitian
15 Literacy Project, a CBO serving Haitian immigrant
16 youth. Our job is to help immigrant youth get access
17 to an education. Unfortunately, the schools that
18 young adult immigrants attend today are overcrowded
19 and underfunded.

20 Brooklyn and Queens have the most immigrants, yet
21 there aren't any school there in the (INAUDIBLE) for
22 these students. Families have to send their students
23 to Manhattan to go to school. And especially in this
24 uncertain times coming, we need students to go to
25

1
2 school where they live. We need newcomer immigrant
3 students to attend school in Brooklyn.

4 We are we're hoping that the City Council, the
5 City, the New York City Public Schools, expand access
6 to have schools in Brooklyn in students' neighborhood
7 where they can attend school safely.

8 But more importantly, I'm here today to speak on
9 behalf of the many immigrant children who call the
10 city home and are the foundation of its diverse and
11 vibrant communities.

12 New York City is known for its cultural tapestry
13 built in part by generations of immigrant families.
14 I'm an immigrant, who have contribute, uh,
15 contributed immeasurably to the city's growth and
16 prosperity. It is it is a city that stands for
17 justice, equality, and protect and the protection of
18 all its (TIMER CHIMES) residents (INAUDIBLE) of their
19 immigration... (CROSS-TALK)

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your testimony,
21 your time has expired.

22 DARNELL BENOIT: status. This includes the
23 thousands of immigrant students who walk to... who
24 walk into our school every day with dreams of
25

1 learning, growing, and building a future for
2 themselves and their families.

3
4 Currently, there is fear of deportation, fear of
5 ICE in our communities and New York schools. There's
6 already an environment of fear and anxiety for many
7 immigrant families. These students, our future
8 engineer teachers and leaders, are scared to go to
9 school because they feel that a day of learning could
10 be interrupted by the threat of deportation.

11 We cannot allow this to continue. I stand here
12 today, I sit here today, to ask the City Council, the
13 and the New York City Public School, the City to
14 reaffirm and strengthen its commitment to keeping ICE
15 out of our schools and ensuring that immigrant
16 students are safe and protected.

17 Our school should have been a place where all
18 students, regardless of their status, can receive a
19 quality education without fear of separation from
20 their families.

21 I call on the Council to enforce and strengthen
22 policies that prohibit ICE from entering schools
23 without a court order. We haven't seen anything yet
24 from the DOE. This protection should be reinforced
25 with clear guidelines that prevent any interaction

1
2 with ICE. It is essential that student, families, and
3 school staff are educated on their rights in the
4 event of an ICE encounter.

5 Students should be aware that they have the right
6 to attend school without fear, and that they should
7 never be questioned or detained by ICE.

8 Schools should also offer access to legal
9 resources and assistance to helping with their
10 families navigate potential ICE interaction and know
11 their rights.

12 Every school should be a safe space for immigrant
13 students. We urge the City Council to fund and
14 support initiatives that create supportive
15 environments for immigrant children, places where
16 they can access resources and counseling, like
17 community organizations.

18 Collaboration between schools, local immigrant
19 rights groups, and legal services providers is key.
20 Representation is key to ensuring that all immigrant
21 students have the legal representation and support
22 that they need.

23 Finally, the safety of immigrant students is not
24 just a legal obligation. It's a moral imperative.
25 These children are not just students. They are our

1
2 neighbors, our future, a central part of what makes
3 New York City one of the most dynamic and diverse
4 city in the world.

5 I ask the City Council to stand up for immigrant
6 students by keeping ICE out of our schools, by
7 creating schools where students live, by providing
8 legal resources, ensuring that schools remain safe.

9 And thank you so much for your consideration.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much, Ms.
11 Benoit.

12 Next, we have Christopher Leon Johnson.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

14 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, hello, my name is
15 Christopher Leon Johnson, and I'm here to support the
16 resolution for New York for All.

17 Yeah, we need to make sure that the NYPD doesn't
18 cooperate with ICE to arrest the wrong migrants, like
19 the ones that sell mangos in the subways and the ones
20 that deliver our food and medicine, like the
21 Deliveristas, and the ones that be outside Home Depot
22 or the Lowe's trying to make a living through day
23 laboring.

24 Now the issue I have here is that we have non
25 profits like the, uhm, like Make the Road New York

1
2 that oversees the day laborers, the street Vendor
3 Project, which is ran by Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez
4 that oversee the street vendors and, Ligia Gualpa
5 that oversee Deliveristas, including the day
6 laborers.

7 They need to start telling those members, their
8 members, that Trump will not have ICE deport them
9 because they're selling mangos inside a subway.

10 Trump is not going to deport them because they're
11 selling, they're delivering food or medicine, like
12 capsule medicine on a sidewalk or something like the
13 drive ride to eat bikes on the sidewalk.

14 Trump is not going to deport them because they
15 outside of Home Depot or Lowe's or Harvard Freight
16 trying to solicit... trying to get work.

17 I work with people that hire these guys to do
18 work for the United Nations, but they're not gonna be
19 deported because of that. They will be deported if
20 they commit violent crimes. What the City Council
21 need to start doing, Mrs. Avilés, I respect you even
22 from this morning with the rally with Brad Pander.
23 You need to start telling these nonprofits to start
24 educating their members about what's the difference
25 from a violent crime and a nonviolent crime.

1
2 Trump is getting inaugurated on the 20th, on
3 21st, or 22nd, none of them like, a member from the
4 Street Vendor Project, you need to tell her... you
5 need to send an email to Kaufman to tell that lady
6 that, well, she is not gonna be picked up by ICE on
7 Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday or Friday because
8 she was at a courthouse under Bragg or any of these
9 state (TIMER CHIMES) district attorneys. ICE will
10 not...

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your testimony,
12 time has expired.

13 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Okay, please, but thank
14 you for this hearing. Education is needed. Violent
15 crime versus nonviolent crimes. And I support New
16 York for All. These nonprofits need to start
17 educating their members, all of them that get
18 government money, about what's the difference from a
19 violent crime and a nonviolent crime.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you... (CROSS-TALK)

21 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Trump will only deport
22 these people... Right, one minute, one second, Trump
23 will only deport these people if they commit a
24 violent crime. Thank you. Have a great day.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Christopher. I
3 wish you were correct. But Trump's track record says
4 otherwise. But thank you for being here. Thank you
5 for being at the rally this morning. And thank you
6 for supporting the resolutions that are being put
7 forward.

8 And I would like to now call on the last
9 remaining testimony to see if they are still in the
10 room: Oscar V? Kamara Kahn? Jonathan Kam? Gustav?
11 Kerry Ann Pauls?

12 Seems like we have now heard from everyone who
13 signed up to testify. If we inadvertently missed
14 anyone who would like to testify in person, please
15 visit the Sergeant at Arms table and complete a
16 witness slip now.

17 If we have inadvertently missed anyone who would
18 like to testify virtually, please use the Zoom Raise
19 Hand Function, and a member of our staff will call on
20 you in the order of hands raised.

21 As a reminder, the following languages are
22 available for interpretation, but we are at the end
23 of our hearing, so we do not need to do that.

24 And we have made the final call for those who
25 were registered to testify, but who have not

1
2 appeared. And seeing no one else, I would like to
3 note again that written testimony will be reviewed in
4 full by committee staff, and may be submitted to the
5 record for up to 72 hours after the close of this
6 hearing by emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

7 And with that, thank you, staff, the public, and
8 the Administration who came here to testify. We stand
9 to protect immigrant New Yorkers, and we will not
10 participate in Trump's xenophobic, racist, bigoted
11 agenda.

12 With that, the hearing is closed.

13 (GAVELING OUT)

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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 February 14, 2025