

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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FEBRUARY 28, 2022
Start: 10:04 A.M.
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HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 1)

B E F O R E: DIANA I. AYALA, CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS: TIFFANY CABÁN
CRYSTAL HUDSON
LINDA LEE
CHI A. OSSÉ
LINCOLN RESTLER
KEVIN C. RILEY
ALTHEA V. STEVENS
SANDRA UNG
NANTASHA M. WILLIAMS
KALMAN YEGER
GALE BREWER

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

RANDY DILLARD, Represents Right to Counsel, Steering Committee

N'JELLE MURPHY, tenant leader with Flatbush Tenant Coalition

LAUREN SPRINGER, Tenant, leader with Catholic Migration Services

JENNIFFER LEE, tenant leader with Flatbush Tenant Coalition

ANNA ABOODY, staff attorney for Mobilization for Justice

MATTHEW LONGOBARDI, Senior Staff attorney Mobilization for Justice

MARIKA DIAZ, Director for Section 8 Project at Evan Justice Center

KATHLEEN KELLEHER, Staff attorney Legal Aid Society

ERIN DRINKWATER, Deputy Commissioner of Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs at DSS

RANEICE MEDLEY, OCJ Coordinator at New York City Department of Social Services

LISA FITZPATRICK, HRA Administrator New York City Human Resource Administration

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

MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN, Catholic Charities

JENNY LAURIE, Executive Director Housing Court Answers

ERIC LEE, Director of Policy and Planning at Homeless Services United

ERIC ROSENBAUM, CEO of Project Renewal

JOSEFA SILVA, Director of Policy and Efficacy for WIN

AMY BLUMSACK, Director of Organizing and Policy at Neighbors Together

SARAH WILSON, Formerly homeless

BEATRICE SIMPKINS, Chief Program Officer for Partnership for the Homeless

ANDY AUJLA, Director of Advocacy Communities Resist

JESENIA PONCE, Supervising attorney at Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation

EMILY PONDER WILLIAMS, Managing attorney of the Civil Defense Practice

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

OKSANA MIRONOVA, Housing Policy Analyst
Community Service Society of New York

IMRAN HOSSAIN, Staff attorney with
Volunteers of Legal Services

RAFAEL MOURE-PUNNETT, Associate Director
for Housing at the Harlem Community
Justice Center

STEPHANIE ESPINAL

ANN KORCHAK, President of SPONY, Small
Property Owners of New York

JOAN ZHU, Landlord

HELEN, Landlord

HONGBAO MA, Landlord

SHUZHEN ZHUO, Landlord

ZELL FINCHEN

TOWAKI KOMATSU, Tenant

DIANNA PERSHAD, Homeowner

KATRINA CORBELL, Member of SHOUT

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

TAMARA HOLLIDAY, Senior Staff Attorney
for Civil Justice Practice

SARAH BLOCK

KRISTIE ORTIZ-LAMB, Brooklyn A Director

2 SGT. LEONARDO: Sergeants we please start
3 the recordings.

4 SGT. MARTINEZ: Cloud recording underway.

5 SGT. LEONARDO: Good morning and welcome
6 to today's remote New York City Council Hearing for
7 the Committee on General Welfare. At this time we
8 ask that Council Members and Council Staff please
9 turn on their video for verification purposes. To
10 minimize disruptions, please place cellphones and
11 electronic devices to vibrate or silent. If you have
12 testimony you wish to submit for the record, you may
13 do so via email at testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once
14 again, that is testimony@council.nyc.gov. We thank
15 you for your cooperation, Chair we are ready to
16 begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Good morning
18 everyone. Good morning and welcome to the very first
19 hearing of the City Council's Committee on General
20 Welfare in this legislative session. My first
21 hearing as the chair of this committee. Today the
22 committee will hold an oversight hearing on the
23 impact on the end of the state and federal eviction
24 moratoria that were put in place to protect tenants
25 from losing their housing during the pandemic and the

2 potential influx of new clients in need of social
3 service assistance. The COVID 19 pandemic has
4 underscored the importance of safe and secure
5 housing. It has never been apparent than housing is
6 healthcare and housing is a human right. It is both
7 a public health and economic priority to keep New
8 Yorkers safely in their homes for the duration of the
9 pandemic but given the end of the eviction moratoria
10 we must proactively get ahead of accommodating what
11 could be a massive influx of new clients in need of
12 assistance. Prior to the pandemic nearly half of New
13 York City households were rent verted, meaning that
14 they paid more than 30% of their income toward rent.
15 The unemployment rates dramatically increased in the
16 five boroughs as they have around the country due to
17 the economic fallout of the pandemic. The pandemic
18 further strained what was already a precarious
19 situation for low income people in New York many of
20 whom will likely have no way to remain in their homes
21 unless the city, state and federal governments take
22 further action to assist them. Today, we want to
23 hear about what the city is doing to protect New
24 Yorkers for losing their homes and what services and
25 programs are available to ensure that those on the

2 brink on homelessness remain stably housed. Thank
3 you to the advocates, members of the public and those
4 with life experience who are joining us remotely
5 today. Thank you representatives from the
6 administration for joining us. I look forward from
7 hearing from you all on these critical issues. At
8 this time I would like to acknowledge my colleagues
9 who are here, Council Members Yeger, Riley, Stevens,
10 Caban, Lee, and Williams. Finally I would like to
11 thank the Committee Staff who worked to prepare this
12 hearing today, Aminta Kilawan our Senior Counsel,
13 Crystal Pond, Senior Policy Analyst, Julia Haramis of
14 Finance Analyst, Rose Martinez Senior Data Scientist,
15 Nicholas Montalbano Data Scientist and my staff
16 Michelle Cruz, Deputy Chief of staff. With that, I
17 will now turn it over to the Senior Counsel Aminta
18 Kilawan to go over some procedural matters for this
19 hearing.

20 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
21 you Chair Ayala, good morning everyone. I am Aminta
22 Kilawan, Senior Counsel for the Committee on General
23 Welfare of the New York City Council. I will be
24 moderating today's hearing. Before we begin I want
25 to go over a few procedural matters. I'll be calling

2 on panelists to testify. I want to remind everyone
3 that you will be on mute until you are called and
4 then you will be unmuted by the host. Please listen
5 for your name to called. For everyone testifying
6 today please note that there may be a few seconds of
7 delay before you are unmuted and we thank you in
8 advance for your patience. At today's hearing the
9 first panel will be comprised of members of the
10 public followed by the administration followed by
11 Council Member questions and then additional members
12 of the public will testify. During the hearing if
13 Council Members would like to ask a question, please
14 use the Zoom Raise Hand function and you will be
15 called upon in order. Again, our first panel will be
16 comprised of public testimony. All public testimony
17 will be limited to two minutes. After I call your
18 name, please wait a brief moment for the Sergeant at
19 Arms to announce that you may begin before starting
20 your testimony and please note that panelist will be
21 able to register for this hearing until three hours
22 into the hearing itself. The first panel in order of
23 speaking will be Randy Dillard followed by N'Jelle
24 Murphy followed by Lauren Springer followed by

2 Jennifer Lee. And we will now begin with Randy
3 Dillard.

4 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time begins now.

5 RANDY DILLARD: Okay. I'm Randy Dillard
6 and I'm here to represent to the Right to Counsel.
7 I'm on the steering committee. I am a Council leader
8 for Community Action for Safe Apartments. In 2017,
9 we passed the Right to Counsel giving access to legal
10 representation to tenants across the City facing
11 eviction cases and the reason why we started this
12 campaign, I live in the Bronx and the Bronx had the
13 highest eviction rate in all five boroughs which was
14 11,000. Can you imagine the suffering of 11,000
15 families losing their homes? We did a survey of the
16 court and we found out that 90% of the landlords had
17 attorneys and 30% of the tenants did not. Tenants
18 will sign the stipulations and did not know what they
19 were signing and we won this right and now 84% of the
20 tenant get to stay in their home. We went back into
21 the court and surveyed it again and we found out that
22 53% of the tenants didn't know that they had the
23 right to counsel. Landlords was getting their early
24 having tenants to sign stipulation before the Right
25 to Counsel Lawyers got there. Tenants was moving out

2 without going to court. Landlords found another way
3 to harass tenants. So, we came back to the City
4 Council to get Local Law 53 passed. While we applaud
5 the city for passing the legislation in May of last
6 year with the effective date of November 2021, we are
7 deeply disappointed that it has not yet been
8 implemented. Since March 2020 more than 227,000
9 eviction cases has been found throughout the case.
10 More than the population of Rochester. Cases in the
11 Bronx account for 40% of cases found in New York
12 Housing Court and everywhere in the city they mostly
13 impact women of color, black and brown people, unpaid
14 workers. This is a crisis. This is critical. We
15 need implementation of the local law 53 with 1.2
16 million households online. Organizers need to be
17 able to get the word out before we have a homeless
18 problem so tenants know that they have a lawyer. We
19 do not know what new tactics that at the landlord
20 will be using to get tenants out of their homes as
21 well as the judge's in the courts. Thank you.

22 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
23 you for your testimony Randy. We are now going to
24 move to N'Jelle Murphy.

25 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time starts now.

2 N'JELLE MURPHY: Good morning and thank
3 you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is
4 N'Jelle Murphy. I am tenant leader with Flatbush
5 Tenant Coalition. A group of tenant leaders and
6 tenant associations in central Brooklyn with a
7 mission to build tenant power. We are a proud member
8 of the Right to Counsel Coalition, Housing Justice
9 for All and Stabilizing NYC. Thank you for accepting
10 my testimony today on behalf of the Flatbush Tenant
11 Coalition. Right to Counsel has shifted the power
12 dynamic of housing court. A place that was created
13 for tenants to get justice for repair. Since the
14 creation, New York City Housing Court has been
15 weaponized by landlords and turned into an eviction
16 mill. The Right to Counsel is changing that. We
17 know that 84% of tenants who had a Right to Counsel
18 lawyer in housing court won their case and stayed in
19 their homes and with Right to Counsel tenants have a
20 strong foundation when we organized to protect our
21 rights and fight for safe and decent living
22 conditions. I testify today on behalf of Flatbush
23 Tenant Coalition for two reasons. First to urge this
24 committee to immediately and fully implement local
25 law 53. Second to work with the courts to ensure

2 that no case moves forward without a Right to Counsel
3 attorney. One, immediately a fully implement law,
4 Local Law 53, last May tenants won a major victory
5 when this City Council passed local law 53. The law
6 requires the city to work with community based
7 tenants organizing groups to spread the word and
8 educate tenants about their right to counsel. Many
9 tenants in our City don't know that they have this
10 right to free legal representation in eviction cases.
11 Most cases that Flatbush Tenant Coalition speaks
12 with, tenants who are not already one of our members,
13 they don't know anything about Right to Counsel.
14 Most have never heard of it before. In New York City
15 more than half of all tenants and families who are
16 forced out of their homes are forced out informally
17 before a judge ever orders an eviction in court.
18 Tenants who don't know about their rights, often
19 believe they will on their own in housing court.
20 That there is no point in fighting and they will be
21 evicted anyway. We know that that's not true. We
22 know that Right to Counsel makes a big difference and
23 allows people to stay in their homes. Even fight for
24 repairs. Local law 53 would provide much needed
25 education and outreach to tenants in our community.

2 It was supposed to be implanted this past November
3 2021. It is now the end of the February 2022 and
4 this law has not been implemented. Most eviction
5 protections end in mid-January and more than 250,000
6 eviction cases are now moving forward in housing
7 courts. Some cases are individual tenants and most
8 are families. That means more than half a million
9 New Yorkers are on the brink of eviction. We ask
10 that the city implement local law 53 immediately like
11 the law requires. We need you to start funding
12 community organizing groups so that tenants across
13 our city can know about and use the Right to Counsel.
14 It is more important than now ever. Two ensure that
15 no case move forward without a Right to Counsel
16 attorney. New York City tenants have a right to
17 counsel in eviction cases. Are deeply concerned by
18 tenant reports that the courts themselves are
19 ignoring this law and trying to speed up case through
20 housing court even when a tenant has not been
21 connected to a lawyer. We want to be clear that we
22 expect the courts to adjourn each case until a tenant
23 has been connected to a lawyer. We also expect that
24 the courts and the Office of Civil Justice will
25 ensure that lawyers don't just end up with more cases

2 than they can handle. Tenants deserve and demand
3 quality representation with Right to Counsel, who
4 deserve lawyers who have enough time to represent us
5 well. Lawyers that we can work with to stay in our
6 homes. We need our City Council to work with the
7 Courts and the Office of Civil Justice to ensure that
8 no tenant faces eviction without legal representation
9 and to ensure that no tenant struggles with
10 inadequate representation because the courts are
11 rushing to do landlords bidding who deserve the
12 demand and the Court respects our right to counsel.
13 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

14 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
15 you very much N'Jelle for your testimony. We will
16 now move to Lauren Springer for testimony.

17 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time begins.

18 LAUREN SPRINGER: My name is Lauren
19 Springer and I'm a tenant leader with Catholic
20 Migration Services, a non-profit legal services
21 provided and community based organization actively
22 engaged in tenant organizing work. I'm only on the
23 steering committee of the New York City Right to
24 Counsel Coalition. The Right to Counsel Law,
25 landmark piece of legislation guaranteeing the right

2 to counsel in eviction proceeding was won after a
3 three year tenant led fight. To secure this victory,
4 we used a plethora of tools at our disposal including
5 among other things holding rallies, press conferences
6 and town hall meetings, testifying at City Council
7 hearings and meeting with elected officials,
8 collecting 7,000 petition signature, making community
9 board presentations, developing a wide base of
10 supporters and employing an active social media
11 campaign and tapping into the power of the press.
12 But even after securing this right in August 2017,
13 tenants continue to fight to strengthen the law
14 securing two key legislative victories in May 2021,
15 specifically the passage of local law 53 which
16 provides for the support and funding of community
17 based tenant organizing groups for RTC, outreach and
18 tenants' rights education and local law 54 which
19 eliminated the five year phase-in period immediately
20 providing full citywide coverage of this right. The
21 exploration of the eviction moratorium is made RTC
22 law and its amendments and its amendments even more
23 critical as tenants base an onslaught on eviction
24 cases. While local law 53 became effective in
25 November 2021, four months later, community based

2 organizations have yet to receive any of the \$3.6
3 million reportedly allocated toward this bill and the
4 request for proposals has yet to be released. The
5 City needs to get in compliance with its own law by
6 releasing funding to the organizers for tenants to
7 exercise their rights they need to know they have
8 them. Additionally we need to slow down the housing
9 court process by joining cases where tenants are
10 unrepresented as not to render the RTC law
11 ineffective. Local Law 54 was passed in recognition
12 of the needs of the times and reflected a
13 codification of OCJs practice instituted during the
14 COVID pandemic. It eliminated the 5-year phase-in
15 period which was implemented in the first place to
16 allow legal service providers time to hire, train and
17 support staff and for the courts to establish the
18 necessary infrastructure. Unfortunately ...

19 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time.

20 LAUREN SPRINGER: ... excuse me?

21 Unfortunately the legal services providers are not
22 immune from the widespread staffing shortages facing
23 many organizations. And so our understanding from
24 coalition partners that Judge Jean Schneider from New
25 York City Housing Court Citywide Supervising Judge

2 has taken the position that where providers don't
3 have capacity to accept cases at intake part, the
4 court plans to move these cases forward in resolution
5 parts without an attorney in respective of a tenants
6 eligibility for RTC. That plan is simply untenable.
7 Moving cases forward without an attorney supports the
8 intent and purpose of the RTC law and represents a
9 retraction of the ground gained by tenants in
10 securing this hard one right. To be clear, no case
11 should move forward without an attorney. Moreover,
12 legal representation should be meaningful. Tenants
13 are entitled to due process and quality
14 representation and do not deserve an overworked,
15 overburdened attorney with caseloads so huge they
16 cannot devote adequate time, attention, effort and
17 resources to their client's cases, nor should cases
18 be proceeding with all deliberate state so that the
19 clearing of court dockets is carried out at the
20 extent of effectuating a tenant's right to legal
21 representation. Thus, I strongly urge the City
22 Council to fully implement both local law 53 by
23 providing funding and support to tenant organizers
24 and ensure that local law 54 is carried out as
25 intended. Thank you.

2 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
3 you Lauren for your testimony and the final panelist
4 for this first panel of our hearing will be Jennifer
5 Lee, moving to Jennifer.

6 JENNIFFER LEE: Good morning and thank
7 you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is
8 Jennifer Lee. I am a tenant leader and steering
9 committee member with the Flatbush Tenant Coalition.
10 We are a group of tenant leaders and tenant
11 associations.

12 AMINTA KILAWAN: Jennifer, Jennifer
13 just, Jennifer, just a second. Sorry to interrupt
14 but I think you might have audio on in the background
15 so maybe you want to turn that.

16 JENNIFFER LEE: Okay. Okay. I'm sorry.
17 Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to
18 testify today. My name is Jennifer Lee. I'm a
19 tenant leader and steering committee member with
20 Flatbush Tenant's Coalition. We are a group of
21 tenant leaders and tenant association group with a
22 mission to build to empower. We are a proud member
23 of the Right to Counsel Coalition, Housing Justice
24 for All and Stabilizing NYC. I'm asking this
25 committee to immediately and fully implement law 53

2 and to work with the courts to ensure that no
3 eviction case moves forward in housing court without
4 an RTC attorney. Tenants won local law 53 this past
5 May but it still hasn't been implemented. The law is
6 supposed to give money to community groups to spread
7 the word and the Right to Counsel in our communities
8 so people in dire straight know that they have a
9 right to free lawyer to represent them in housing
10 court. Lots of people facing eviction don't know
11 they have someone to turn to. They are harassed by
12 landlords and pushed out of their apartments thinking
13 they are on their own. We need you to make sure
14 Local Law 53 is implemented so that our neighbors
15 know that legal help is available if they are facing
16 eviction and where they can get it. We also need you
17 to ensure that no tenant with the Right to Counsel
18 faces housing court on their own. There are too many
19 tenants in housing courts right now and not enough
20 lawyers to represent them all immediately. We have
21 heard that the courts plan to deal with the situation
22 to just force some tenants to have a Right to Counsel
23 to go through the housing court process on their own,
24 not represented by an RTC attorney. We also have
25 heard that the court is bullying legal organizations

2 into taking more cases than they can reasonably
3 handle. We remind you, New York City tenants have a
4 Right to Counsel. This means that we have the right
5 to quality legal representative. When a tenant is in
6 court and there isn't an attorney immediately
7 available, we demand that these cases be adjourned
8 until tenants can get proper legal representation.
9 Almost every landlord has a lawyer in housing court.

10 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

11 JENNIFFER LEE: But, every day tenants
12 are not lawyers and most of us cannot afford their
13 own lawyers. How will everyday people defend
14 themselves against landlord lawyers in housing court?
15 We are regular people trying to stay in our homes.
16 We have a right to free RTC attorney. That right
17 must be respected. We ask you, our City Councils to
18 work with courts with the Office of Civil Justice to
19 make sure that no tenant faces eviction without
20 quality legal representation. Thank you for the
21 opportunity to testify.

22 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you
23 Jennifer. I'd like to acknowledge that we've also
24 been joined by Council Members Brewer, Hudson,
25 Restler and Ung.

2 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
3 you very much Chair and thank you to this entire
4 panel for your testimony. Chair or Council Member do
5 you have any questions? If, Council Members if you
6 do you may use the Raise Hand Function and Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I don't have a,
8 I don't have any questions per se but I just wanted
9 to say thank you for your advocacy and continued
10 advocacy and you are absolutely right, if tenants are
11 not aware that these protections exist then we might
12 as well not have them in place. I, I was actually
13 not aware that we had, that that Local Law had not
14 been implemented yet. So, you know, even I am
15 learning something today and I, I will, you know look
16 into this and we'll try to figure out what the holdup
17 is and see how we can be helpful in ensuring that we
18 are moving that along as quickly as possible because
19 that doesn't make any sense to me that we are in the
20 middle of the worst, you know, crisis the City has
21 seen in so many years and that we even have to go
22 back and remind them that this has to be done. So
23 thank you all, I know that this is not easy work but
24 it is important work so I just want to, to just
25 recognize that, you know, we, we really appreciate

2 you. I don't know if any other members, if other
3 members have anything that they would like to add. I
4 don't see any.

5 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: It
6 looks like Council Member Brewer has questions
7 followed by Council Member Hudson.

8 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time.

9 GALE BREWER: Thank you very much Madam
10 Chair and to the Committee. When, I believe that
11 ANHD, Association of Neighborhood Housing Developers
12 has a task force on housing court data. So, what
13 we're trying to do with that data in addition, God
14 help us to know where evictions are. They have found
15 the Housing Court data because I helped them get it
16 that says where evictions might be taking place
17 because the owners have filed papers. So I'm
18 wondering if any of you have had any contact through
19 any of your non-profits. Because what's supposed to
20 happen is that if there is data showing that there
21 are, you know, hold overs being filed or whatever
22 kind of eviction the owners are trying to pull off,
23 hopefully unsuccessfully, that we can then send in
24 some of your re-organizations to either organize or
25 have legal representation. I just didn't know if

2 anybody is aware of this effort and if you are if
3 they are successful. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I'd like to
5 recognize that we've also been joined by Council
6 Member Osse. Council Member Brewer was the question
7 answered?

8 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL:
9 Lauren, Lauren has her hand raised and can likely
10 answer the question. If Lauren can be unmuted.

11 LAUREN SPRINGER: Okay. I, and I can't
12 answer the question, I'm not sure. I know that the
13 Coalition is, utilizes data like that but I do want
14 to say that I think that if we can identify likely
15 places of eviction and then send in the CBOs I think
16 that's excellent. We need to get ahead of the
17 problem. We need to be proactive about it. So, to
18 any extent that we can use that data, I, I absolutely
19 agree.

20 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you so
21 much for your response Lauren. I'm now going to turn
22 it over to Council Member Hudson for questions.

23 CRYSTAL HUDSON: Hi there, good morning.
24 Thanks everyone and thank you Chair Ayala. I just,
25 before I get into my questions I want to note that

2 residents and ZIP codes included in part or full in
3 my district, District 35 have filed more than 21,000
4 EVAP applications including over 10,000 for rental
5 arrears, over 8,000 for prospective rental arrears
6 and over 2500 for utility arrears and my district
7 lost 20% of its black population over just the last
8 decade and so I'm very concerned that we will see a
9 continued displacement of black residents during the,
10 this next recurrent eviction crisis. And so I wanted
11 to ask some questions specifically about older adults
12 who of course are included in those numbers. How
13 many older adults have applied for one shot deals and
14 how many times have they needed to apply before
15 they've been approved is my first question? How does
16 HRA conduct outreach about One Shot Deals to older
17 adult facilities? Are there relationships
18 established with NORCs, older adult centers, home
19 care providers or any other organization that are
20 serving older adult? And are there programs or
21 grants for older adult many of whom are on severely
22 restricted incomes where they can apply to have the
23 repayment requirement waived?

24 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL:

25 Council Member I'm not sure if you're, thank you so

2 much of your questions. I'm not sure if you are
3 aware but the first panel that we had for this
4 hearing was a public panel and I believe your
5 questions are geared toward members of the
6 Administration?

7 CRYSTAL HUDSON: Yes. Sorry, I, I ...

8 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No
9 worries. If it's possible for you to hold on those
10 questions and then re-ask them when we, when the,
11 after the administration testifies that would be
12 really, really helpful.

13 CRYSTAL HUDSON: Sure thing. Sorry about
14 that.

15 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
16 you so much Council Member. No worries. We are now
17 going to move on to Council Member Restler for
18 questions.

19 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time begins.

20 LINCOLN RESTLER: Thank you so much.

21 Firstly, let me just congratulate my friend,
22 Chairwoman Ayala. I cannot think of a better person
23 in the, not just the City Council, in the world to be
24 chairing this committee and we are so lucky to have
25 Diana at the helm of one of the most critical

2 committees in the Council and thank you Chairwoman
3 Ayala for your leadership. Really excited to work
4 together with you here. I want to take the
5 opportunity as well to congratulate our now HRA
6 Administer, Lisa Patrick who is awesome and we are
7 lucky to have such a really experienced and capable
8 government administrator in this role. Lisa is a GSD
9 kind of person, a get shit done kind of person, so
10 thank you Lisa. My question is for Ms. Springer, and
11 I just want to thank the tenant leaders and
12 organizers. Randy has been doing this work for a
13 long time, he's one of the great advocates and
14 activists out there. So thank you for everything you
15 do at CASA and Ms. Lee from Flatbush Tenant Coalition
16 but Ms. Springer, I'm really interested if you could
17 speak to the capacity side on legal services. I
18 think we are all ea-, we all at the Council
19 understand how important it is to guarantee Right to
20 Counsel for every tenant. And that's the best way to
21 keep tenants in their home and avoid evictions. But
22 my understanding is that we are struggling to keep up
23 with the legal capac-, with the legal services
24 capacity even within the very narrow income bands
25 that the program serves currently. And I certainly

2 would love us to not, you know to expand the income
3 bands and make it a universal program where every
4 tenant in New York City is guaranteed a free attorney
5 but I'm very concerned that our legal services
6 organizations don't yet have the capacity to do it.
7 Could you speak to the current capacity constraints
8 and any strategies that we should be employing
9 together to expand legal services capacities so that
10 universal access to counsel is truly a right that we
11 can guarantee for all New Yorkers?

12 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If
13 staff can please unmute Lauren Springer.

14 LAUREN SPRINGER: Okay. So basically
15 you're right. I mean there are issues in terms of
16 what capacity currently as we've testified. So,
17 attorneys are basically handling unprecedented
18 caseloads and so they're handling like maybe upwards
19 of 60 to 80 cases. Also what's happening and then
20 what we've heard is that there's a faster pace of the
21 court caseload so it's like whereas like it used to
22 be judges would hear one case for every 30 minutes
23 and in an RTC intake part, now they're having like
24 two cases every 15 minutes. With respect to managing
25 the caseloads, it really is about like slowing down

2 the court process. Um, it's about allowing the
3 adjournment and giving the adjournments that are
4 actually meaningful because a lot of times what is
5 happening even if there is an adjournment they're
6 short so like maybe one to two weeks which is not
7 adequate time for an organization to get up to speed.
8 Basically to get the capacity. They are already
9 handling all of these cases. So, I think in a sense
10 it is really about prioritizing what's important
11 here. This isn't, you know, tenants are entitled to
12 due process. I mean basically the fact that this is
13 full, RTC is fully implemented across the city so
14 it's really about making sure that cases don't move
15 forward when tenants are not represented and it's
16 allowing the time for these legal service providers
17 to either cut down on caseloads or, you know, come up
18 to speed in terms of dealing with their staffing
19 shortages. And I think that anything that the City
20 Council can do to urge the courts to just basically
21 follow the law that was passed I think would be
22 helpful.

23 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
24 you so much Lauren for your response and thank you
25 Council Member Restler for your questions. See no

2 other Council Member hands raised for questions for
3 this panel, Chair are we ready to move on to?

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: We are.

5 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay.

6 So, I am now going to call on members of the
7 Administration to testify. HRA Administrator Lisa
8 Fitzpatrick, OCJ Coordinator Raniece Medley and for
9 questions and answers Deputy Commissioner Erin
10 Drinkwater. I am first going to read the oath and
11 after I will call on each panelist here from the
12 Administration individually to respond. Do you
13 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
14 but the truth before this committee and to respond
15 honestly to Council Member questions, HRA
16 Administrator Lisa Fitzpatrick?

17 LISA FITZPATRICK: I do.

18 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
19 you. Do you affirm to tell the truth the whole truth
20 and nothing but the truth before this committee and
21 to respond honestly to Council Member questions, OCJ
22 Coordinator Raniece Medley?

23 RANIECE MEDLEY: I do.

24 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And
25 finally do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole

2 truth and nothing but the truth before this committee
3 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions,
4 Deputy Commissioner Erin Drinkwater?

5 ERIN DRINKWATER: I do.

6 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
7 you all. HRA Administrator Fitzpatrick, you may
8 begin when ready.

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: Thank you. Good
10 morning. I want to thank the General Welfare
11 Committee and Chair Ayala for holding today's hearing
12 and for the opportunity to testify and offer my
13 congratulations to the Chair on her appointments. My
14 name is Lisa Fitzpatrick and I am the Administrator
15 of the New York City Human Resources Administration,
16 HRA. Let me take a moment to say I would look
17 forward to working with you in my new capacity as
18 administrator. I've spent the last 30 years working
19 for HRA and I am honored to now serve as
20 administrator. I am joined today by Raniece Medley,
21 the Civil Justice Coordinator at the New York City
22 Department of Social Services Office of Civil Justice
23 as well as Erin Drinkwater, Deputy Commissioner of
24 Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs at DSS.
25 The New York City Department of Social Services Human

2 Resources Administration is the nation's largest
3 social services agency. Each year we assist more
4 than 3 million New Yorkers through the Administration
5 of 14 public assistance programs. Every day in all
6 five boroughs HRA provides essential programs and
7 supports to low income New Yorkers. In administering
8 these programs, HRA is at the forefront of this
9 Administration's efforts to combat poverty and
10 address homelessness. As part of DSS, the Office of
11 Civil Justice largest, manages and monitors the
12 City's Civil Legal Services programs for low income
13 and other vulnerable New Yorkers in need. OCJ is
14 currently working with nearly 70 non-profit legal
15 service organizations to ensure thousands of New
16 Yorkers in need across the five boroughs have access
17 to legal services and legal matters involving
18 housing, immigration and the workplace. We
19 appreciate the opportunity to speak today on the work
20 that DSS, HRA and our partners in and out of
21 government are doing to help vulnerable New Yorkers
22 stay in their homes. The COVID-19 pandemic has
23 brought along an unprecedented environment for many
24 New Yorkers and this climate further increased the
25 housing instability for many of our clients and

2 tenants across the five boroughs. Today, we will be
3 updating the Committee on the work the DSS, HRA along
4 with our legal service and non-profit partners have
5 done to prevent evictions throughout this pandemic.
6 DSS HRAs eviction prevention work. The pandemic
7 brought on many challenges for New Yorkers and
8 government alike and we were fortunate to have built
9 a strong foundation via Housing Focus Services and
10 Supports over the years to help tenants during this
11 time of crisis. DSS HRA has developed a multi-
12 pronged approach to support at risk tenants via
13 programs providing legal services, rental support,
14 homelessness prevention assistance and other
15 supports. These existing programs placed us in good
16 stead as the pandemic hit and we encouraged you to
17 help us connect New Yorkers in need to these critical
18 programs as we all worked to prevent evictions and
19 keep individuals and families in their homes. Legal
20 services and the right to Counsel. DSS Office of
21 Civil Justice has marched and operated a wide range
22 of Civil Legal Services for New Yorkers in need since
23 the office's inception in 2015. At the center of
24 this work is the implementation of New York City's
25 ground breaking Right to Counsel Law. In partnership

2 with the City Council, New York City made history by
3 becoming the first City in the nation to enact a law
4 ensuring that all tenants facing eviction in housing
5 court or in administration termination of tenancy
6 proceedings in public housing have access to free
7 legal services. Since the Right to Counsel Law was
8 enacted in 2017 the landscape for access to housing
9 justice for tenants in New York City has been
10 transformed. We are proud to report that we are
11 making real and substantial progress in increasing
12 access to justice which is leading more and more to
13 fair and just outcomes for tenants in need.

14 Moreover, New York City's Right to Counsel Law is now
15 implemented citywide with tenants regardless of the
16 ZIP code or immigration status having access to legal
17 services which are provided by our OCJ contracted
18 legal services providers. These efforts have had
19 dramatic and positive results for at risk tenants.

20 Residential evictions by city marshalls fell by over
21 40% between 2013 and 2019 while nationwide evictions
22 climbed and the percentage of tenants facing eviction
23 in court with the help and protection of legal
24 representation stood at 38% at the end of 2019 up
25 from a mere 1% in 2013. Moreover, in the

2 overwhelming majority of cases when tenants have
3 lawyers and eviction proceedings they get positive
4 results. For resolved cases in calendar year 2020,
5 86% of households represented in housing court and
6 public housing proceedings by OCJ funded tenant
7 lawyers were able to remain in their homes. At the
8 end of 2021, over 574,000 New Yorkers have received
9 free legal representation or assistance in eviction
10 and other housing related matters since 2014 through
11 legal services programs administered by DSS HRA.
12 These efforts have leveled the playing field for
13 tenants and we look forward to partnering with our
14 non-profit legal service providers, advocates,
15 partners in government and the City Council to
16 further build on this progress. Rental assistance
17 programs. Our legal assistance work is part of a
18 broader array of eviction prevention tools and DSS
19 HRA. Among these programs and tools are our rental
20 assistance and arrears programs which help stabilize
21 the housing conditions of tenants at risk of
22 eviction. We have increased access to rental
23 assistance by taking various steps such as and most
24 critically re-establishing rental programs and then
25 stream lining them into one program, CityFHEPS.

2 CityFHEPS had replaced various rental assistance
3 programs making it easier for tenants to get the
4 support they need and streamlining landlord payments
5 and case administration. Moreover in October the
6 raised the value of the CityFHEPS rental assistance
7 program to the Federal Section 8 Fair Market rent,
8 FMR levels and changed renewal eligibility from 250%
9 of the federal poverty level to 80% of the area
10 median income, AMI. Raising the value of the
11 CityFHEPS rental assistance will increase housing
12 options available as client's transition to permanent
13 housing from shelter as well as going further and
14 helping New Yorkers who may be experiencing
15 homelessness or facing eviction remain in their
16 homes. Home base. Shifting to homeless prevention
17 services, HRA oversees 26 home based centers across
18 the five boroughs. The home based program provides
19 various homeless prevention services and aftercare
20 services to families and individual exiting shelter
21 and transferring to permanent housing. New Yorkers
22 may be eligible for home based if they are at eminent
23 risk of entering the New York City Shelter System or
24 low income and want to remain stably housed in their
25 community. Once in the program, dedicated home based

2 staff are available in each borough to evaluate a
3 household's specific needs and offer support such as
4 services to prevent eviction, assistance obtaining
5 public benefits, emergency rental assistance,
6 utilities and mortgage payment support to address
7 arrears. Short term financial assistance,
8 educational and job placement assistance and help
9 relocating. These programs and more importantly the
10 outcomes show the importance of investing in a
11 prevention first approach to address housing
12 instability. The agency has connected more than
13 155,000 New Yorkers to rental assistance and
14 rehousing programs and supported nearly 60,000 rent
15 burdened households annually, payback rent or
16 utilities during the prior administration and we
17 expect to continue this trend under Mayor Adams
18 leadership. DSS HRAs eviction prevention work during
19 the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, we would like to shift to
20 updating the committee on our work and response to
21 the COVID-19 pandemic. While we continue to build on
22 the progress of the housing support programs
23 mentioned today, we understand that the pandemic has
24 brought on a new and challenging environment
25 particularly as it impacts vulnerable tenants. Given

2 the public health emergency and the importance of
3 stabile housing, the city strongly advocated for
4 eviction moratoriums in both the magislator and the
5 courts. Several housing eviction moratoriums and
6 extensions were implemented at the federal and state
7 level with the goal of giving tenants the reprieve
8 they needed to remain in their homes and recover from
9 the financial downturn. As you know, the New York
10 State Eviction Moratorium came to a close on January
11 15th of this year. In response, the City launched a
12 campaign to inform tenants about their rights and
13 connect them to critical resources. Our campaign
14 focuses on three key messages, one illegal lock outs.
15 It is illegal for someone to pressure or force a
16 tenant to leave their home. Tenants have the right
17 to stay in their home unless they have received an
18 eviction order signed by a judge and delivered by a
19 marshall or sheriff. Moreover, a landlord cannot
20 evict tenants verbally or through letters or notice
21 and tenants have the right to heat, hot water and
22 electricity and it is illegal for someone to shut of
23 utilities to try to remove tenants from their homes.
24 Two, the right to counsel. Under the New York City's
25 Right to Counsel Law, DSS's Office of Civil Justice

2 provides tenants facing eviction in housing court or
3 NYCHA registrative proceedings access to free legal
4 representation and legal advice. Right to Counsel's
5 legal services are free, available in every ZIP code
6 and available regardless of immigration status.

7 Tenants can call 3-1-1 and ask for Right to Counsel
8 to speak to a housing specialist who can connect them
9 to free legal services. Three, ERAP. We are urging
10 all New Yorkers in need for rental relief to apply
11 for the emergency rental assistant program, ERAP
12 through the New York State Office of Temporary
13 Disability Assistance, OTDA. As a pending
14 application, will provide temporary protection from
15 eviction. Focusing on legal assistance, we transform
16 the way this critical support was provided to tenants
17 to meet the new pandemic environment. We work with
18 our legal services partners, housing court answers,
19 the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit, PEU and the
20 Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants, MOPT to quickly
21 stand up a housing legal hotline to provide access to
22 live legal advice by telephone provided by our tenant
23 legal service partners. Legal advice services are
24 free and are available to all New York City
25 residential renters with housing questions or issues

2 regardless of income, ZIP code or immigration status.
3 Tenants can access these services by calling 3-1-1
4 and asking for the city's tenant help line hosted by
5 PEU or through housing court answers hotline. Legal
6 service providers continue to be available to connect
7 with tenants at initial appearances across all
8 boroughs. OCJ continues to work with the housing
9 court supporting a case referral protocol assuring
10 that unrepresented tenants are connected with legal
11 counsel. When housing court has fully reopened for
12 all eviction proceedings, stays for pending ERAP
13 applications and other procedural safeguards remain
14 for certain eviction matters. At just one month past
15 the end of the moratorium it is still too soon to say
16 how the housing legal system, case scheduling system
17 and court operations will be impacted. In the wake
18 of the moratorium and the upheaval of the pandemic as
19 across all sectors recruitment and hiring continue to
20 present challenges for legal services providers.
21 While at this time new eviction filings have not
22 returned to pre-pandemic numbers, it is unlikely that
23 OCJ providers can continue to provide full
24 representation to tenants above 200% of the federal
25 poverty level. Even if full representation is

2 discontinued for over income tenants they will still
3 continue to receive free legal advice and brief
4 counsel to understand the legal process and be
5 equipped to defend their cases. Working together,
6 PEU, MOPT and OCJ conduct a proactive outreach to
7 tenants at risk of eviction throughout the pandemic.
8 This outreach included a mail campaign promoting the
9 launch of the tenant helpline as well as a targeted
10 outreach, mail and phone outreach directed at New
11 York City tenants who face pre-pandemic eviction
12 warrants or who were at risk of eviction for failing
13 to appear in court proceedings. Since its inception
14 in April 2020, the city's tenant helpline run by PEU
15 has received almost 90,000 calls from New Yorkers
16 with housing related issues. The helpline was
17 designed to serve as a one stop shop to inform New
18 York City tenants about their rights and connect them
19 to housing related resources including free legal
20 services. Because tenants who call the help line are
21 frequently experiencing a range of connected
22 hardships. The help line expanded to serve callers
23 more holistically by connecting them with additional
24 city programs like SNAP, cash assistance, home base,
25 one shot deals, and helping them to apply for state

2 programs like rent relief and unemployment insurance.
3 Unlike 3-1-1 the helpline is staffed by housing
4 experts who can triage a wide variety of calls and
5 immediately determine whether the client will need
6 comprehensive case management or a simple referral to
7 another agency or a community based organization. To
8 accurately identify a client's need and provide them
9 with the personalized care necessary to address
10 sensitive cases requires extensive training and PEU
11 staff are uniquely equipped with the skills required
12 for these conversations. When case management is
13 needed, helpline staff referred the tenant to in
14 house tenant support unit specialists who seamlessly
15 opened a case for the calling and assist them at
16 every stage of the process whether fighting and
17 eviction or landlord harassment. When making a
18 referral, PEU specialists consistently follow up with
19 all parties to ensure the referral has the successful
20 and support the caller if they encounter a road block
21 in the process. This types of hands on support is
22 particularly critical when dealing with cases related
23 to possible vacate orders, illegal lock outs,
24 undocumented callers and others with sensitive or
25 otherwise urgent situations. In addition to

2 receiving incoming calls PEU is conducting aggressive
3 pro-active outreach to tenants in housing court.

4 PEUs campaign includes peer to peer texting,
5 individualized telephone calls and a citywide media
6 campaign. The team has already conducted outreach to
7 over 40,000 tenants with cases currently in housing
8 court to connect them to resources and legal support.

9 They are also reaching out to tenants who have not
10 appeared for their court date based on weekly data
11 from OCJ and emphasizing the importance of appearance
12 and offering referrals to legal service providers.

13 Since the beginning of the pandemic, MOPT has worked
14 to make sure city agency efforts are coordinated.

15 Streamlining and enhancing our enforcement and
16 strategic initiatives while conducting outreach to
17 support tenants. We have created and helped to
18 create an ecosystem of resources for tenants to
19 access information about their rights and communicate
20 with the city. As mentioned before, in 2020 and in
21 close partnership with PEU and OCJ we establish the
22 city's tenant helpline to make sure all New York City
23 residential tenants regardless of their income,
24 immigration status or whether they live in the City
25 could connect with a PEU specialist and if needed a

2 non-profit legal service is provided to get the help
3 they need. Also in 2020, we launched the City's
4 Tenant Resource Portal. Another one stop shop for
5 tenants to learn about eviction proceedings and what
6 to do when facing an eviction and if needed connect
7 with the PEU specialist from the tenant helpline. In
8 2021, we launched a pilot version of the tenant text
9 and partnership with Just Fix. Tenant text a text
10 messaging tool connects renters in Inward and
11 Washington Heights with up to date information and
12 organizational resources to address their housing
13 questions. It is our intention to expand this
14 resource citywide in late 2022. We continually
15 update our MOPT COVID-19 fact sheet that includes
16 federal, state and local guidance regarding COVID-19
17 that covers many aspects of renting in New York City
18 including how to access rental assistance programs
19 and how to get help when facing harassment and
20 eviction. We have conducted and continued to conduct
21 citywide and targeting outreach to tenants. This
22 includes several mailing campaigns to tenants with
23 active eviction cases in housing court since early
24 2020. These campaign have included information about
25 tenant's right and how to submit a harsher

2 declaration to trigger eviction protections,
3 information about ERAP and eviction protections and
4 lastly information about illegal lock outs and
5 additional eviction protections after the expiration
6 of the eviction moratorium. MOPT continues to send
7 these mailers on a weekly basis to any tenant who has
8 a new eviction case against them in housing court.
9 In partnership with OCJ, DSS and PEU we launched a
10 right to counsel public education campaign in late
11 2020-2021. In early 2022, with the additional
12 support of the Department of Housing Preservation and
13 Development HPD we launched that illegal evictions
14 and evictions moratorium campaign which is still
15 running and aims to inform tenants about their rights
16 with facing an illegal eviction and how to access
17 additional eviction protections. State and federal
18 landscape on housing support. As mentioned earlier,
19 and in accordance with state law, the New York State
20 OTTA is administering ERAP. Though this program
21 federal funding is available for city households who
22 are behind in their rent. Moreover, ERAP provides
23 certain eviction protections to tenants who filed for
24 participation in the program. In New York City, DSS
25 HRA launched an outreach and education program where

2 the city contracted with local community based
3 organizations to provide New Yorkers with assistance
4 in completing ERAP applications. We partnered with
5 organizations at each of the five boroughs to provide
6 ERAP support. Their outreach included application
7 assistance conducting trainings and presentations to
8 community groups, tabling and canvassing and other
9 forms of direct contact with tenants in need. ERAP
10 and other programs such as the federal emergency
11 housing vouchers have provided critical support
12 during these unprecedented times. These programs
13 along with the services provided each day by our
14 partner providers and staff are more tools in the
15 toolbox that we can deploy to help tenants in need
16 and stabilize their housing conditions. In closing,
17 we appreciate the opportunity to testify today and
18 update you on the work that DSS HRA and our partners
19 have done and continue to do to support tenants in
20 need. We stand ready to help vulnerable tenants
21 through their housing uncertainty and we look forward
22 to partnering with the council on these efforts.
23 Thank you and we welcome any questions you may have.

24 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
25 you Administrator Fitzpatrick for your testimony and

2 to the administration for your testimony at large. I
3 am now going to turn it over to Chair Ayala for
4 questions for the administration.

5 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you
6 Administrator Fitzpatrick that was actually a really
7 great testimony and I want to just you know give
8 credit where credit is due. I have been paying
9 attention to the public awareness campaigns that the
10 DSS has launched in the last year. And I actually
11 find them very informative. My only critique would
12 be not even -- it's not even a critique but I
13 actually I would welcome a partnership with DSS and I
14 think that many of my colleagues would agree if it
15 would be possible to get that information in to our
16 local offices but we have constituents coming in and
17 out where we can share, that would be really helpful.
18 I think it would help, you know, amply that these
19 resources exist out there because I think you know
20 that is usually challenging especially when we rely
21 so heavily nowadays on, you know, you tube and, you
22 know, the internet and assume that we, you know, most
23 people use the trains and so I got that we're trying
24 to be in all places at all times but there are places
25 where we know for sure that people will come in let

2 us to our constematic [sounds like] offices and so we
3 are happy to help spread the word. With that in,
4 having said I wanted to ask, what is DSS doing to
5 coordinate with the stay partners. Have there any
6 meetings or ongoing conversations since the end of
7 eviction moratoria?

8 LISA FITZPATRICK: Thank you Chair Ayala.
9 We definitely appreciate the Council's support and
10 getting the message out and getting the word out. As
11 the testimony disclosed there is a lot of great work
12 that is happening and although we do as much as
13 possible to get it out we need partnership with the
14 Council to make sure the message gets out even
15 further. I want to defer to my colleague Erin
16 Drinkwater about the partnership. Can someone unmute
17 her, oh, thank you. Oh, you're muted again Erin,
18 there you go.

19 ERIN DRINKWATER: There we go. Thank you
20 Chair. In terms of partnership, one what I will say
21 about getting materials to the council. We will
22 follow up afterwards, we have a direct line that
23 Council Members can order materials from, the agency
24 that will be mailed directly to District offices so
25 we will certainly follow up to make sure that members

2 of this Committee have that information and we can
3 share it with staff so they can circulate that to all
4 members as well. In terms of the discussions with
5 other groups, I'm going to pass it over to Raniece
6 Medley to talk about those discussions.

7 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you. Good morning
8 Chairwoman and all of the Council Members that are
9 here, thank you. Regarding a partnership with state,
10 that in our wheelhouse at OCJ that primarily needs
11 the office of Court Administration and housing courts
12 is the biggest state partner that we work with
13 directly and we are in constant communication with
14 them as well as our legal service partners to
15 understand how the cases are flowing, what the work
16 flow looks like and how the program is supported in
17 the courthouses so that we can best connect with
18 tenants that are coming into the court. So for
19 instance, one of the things that we're very much
20 wanting to support in our partnership with the courts
21 is making sure that there are touchpoints and
22 opportunities in the court system no matter where
23 individuals may present in court to be connected with
24 Council and through our partnership with housing
25 courts we've been able to ensure that when people

2 present to court even if it's not in that part that's
3 designated for individuals to show that they are able
4 to connected with Counsel when they come through
5 those doors. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Has there been
7 any conversation with the state and the federal
8 government about additional resources to help fund
9 programs such as ERAP because I'm concerned that we
10 are encouraging more and more New Yorkers to apply
11 for ERAP when we know that we don't have the
12 resources necessary to pay that out, just yet, but
13 you know using it as a tool to kind of detour
14 evictions which is great but what happens is that if
15 you are applying for ERAP and you know you could have
16 easily applied for a one shot deal because maybe you
17 don't owe that much. Now, you don't qualify or a one
18 shot deal because you've already, you have an
19 application pending for ERAP. So, is there
20 conversations, with, you know, has DSS or the city or
21 the admin been having conversations with the state
22 and federal government that has made you know you all
23 comfortable knowing that we're sending all of these
24 people to apply for ERAP because at some point these

2 programs will, you know receive the additional
3 dollars that they need to, to pay out.

4 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you. I'll defer
5 to my colleague. I, I will say that with regard to
6 the ERAP I noticed that you mentioned Council Member
7 Ayala that individuals are not able to apply to one
8 shot deals because of the ERAP application pending
9 and I know my colleagues here can speak more to that,
10 that has changed, I know, with the second round of
11 the ERAP portal opening but I defer to, Administrator
12 Fitzpatrick or Erin to be able to expound further.

13 LISA FITZPATRICK: Thank you Raniece
14 that's actually accurate. Once the porter reopened
15 for applications, ERAP no longer became an available
16 resource. So yes, we strongly encourage every
17 household to apply in order to get the eviction
18 prevention that it offers but we don't have, we don't
19 hold the one shot deal decision waiting for an ERAP
20 determination. There have been conversations with
21 the state to try to get additional funding for the
22 program but as we all know the state is working
23 through the federal government to try to get
24 additional funding so in the interim we continue to
25 encourage people to apply for it if for no other

2 reason but to get the eviction protections. Prior to
3 the portal closing if someone applied for a one shot
4 deal they were sent to ERAP to apply for ERAP as an
5 available resource so for those initial applications
6 which have sense passed but for those initial
7 applications we encouraged ERAP because as you know
8 ERAP funding is free. There is no repayment
9 agreement. It's available to non-citizens as well so
10 it was more of a resource to individuals than to cash
11 assistance one shot deal. But since the portal has
12 reopened that is no longer the case. The state put
13 out guidance saying this is not considered an
14 available resource so we don't defer applications
15 anymore in order for clients to apply. We want to
16 encourage them to because that provides the eviction
17 protections but we don't require it as a condition of
18 eligibility for one shot deals.

19 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: No, I get that.
20 I, I, when did that change occur? Was that recent?

21 LISA FITZPATRICK: It was when the portal
22 reopened yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Can you remind
24 me when, how long ago that was?

2 LISA FITZPATRICK: I think it was, it was
3 in January I don't have the exact date that the
4 portal reopened, I can get that for you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Yeah, because
6 we, we have had cases I know in my office and I'm
7 sure I'm not, you know, it's not exclusive to us,
8 where you know constituents have been denied the one
9 shot deal because they have a pending ERAP
10 application. And so that, that really just, it
11 concerns me and I wonder, you know, if, we're not
12 able to secure those, those dollars that, you know,
13 well then I have a backlog of, you know, of people
14 that could have maybe you know just easily applied
15 for the one shot. And I get it. I mean if it was,
16 if I was applying for one or the other I'd rather
17 apply for the ERAP that I don't have to pay back
18 because it creates, you know, a financial burden but
19 I just want to, you know, just to make sure that
20 people understood that they had options and what
21 those options were. OK. Hold on a second, I kind o
22 lost my track of thought here, so. Do we know what
23 the number of applications is, has been for one shot
24 deals today versus what it, what they were in let's
25 say March of 2020?

2 LISA FITZPATRICK: Uh, we don't have that
3 data available today, but we'd be happy to get that
4 to you?

5 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Can you please,
6 I would appreciate that. Do we know what the number
7 of families in shelter is today versus what they were
8 in March of 2020?

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: That's a very good
10 question but again we don't have the data available.
11 I do have the date of the reopening off the portal.
12 It reopened on the evening of January 11th.

13 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: January 11th.

14 LISA FITZPATRICK: 2022.

15 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you. OK.
16 In regarding the FEPs appli-, the FEPs vouchers. So
17 the value increased however, have we, do we know,
18 does DSS capture data that sounds like. We gave out
19 10,000 vouchers and 5,000 families were housed.

20 LISA FITZPATRICK: I, us, I'm sorry
21 Council Member.

22 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: And what's FEPs
23 vouchers.

24

25

2 LISA FITZPATRICK: The FEPS are the
3 CityFHEPs. Yeah, we don't have that data available
4 as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Okay.

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: But it's something
7 that we might be able to.

8 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: To help me
9 colleagues to understand that. You know, obviously
10 it's a new Administration and so some, they may not
11 have all of the information for us at today's hearing
12 but they will, you know, it's important to, you know,
13 to get up, to be on record and they will forward the
14 information to us so, if, you know, I didn't want to,
15 just to clarify because I know people that ask when,
16 when we're not getting the information that that we
17 are requesting. But these are important questions
18 either way. I'm going to, let me see, I had another
19 question on how, can you tell us how DSS is working
20 with those who are undocumented and at risk of
21 eviction.

22 LISA FITZPATRICK: So, Chair Ayala are
23 you referring to people coming in to apply for one
24 shots or?

25 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Yes.

2 LISA FITZPATRICK: Or as an outreach
3 effort?

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: No, as an
5 outreach effort. How are we connecting with
6 undocumented families?

7 LISA FITZPATRICK: Okay. Raniece?

8 RANIECE MEDLEY: Sure, thank you
9 Chairwoman. For our public education campaigns which
10 include the Right to Counsel Campaign and the
11 Evictions Moratorium and Illegal Lockouts Campaign
12 that we heard about that have been administered or
13 largely pushed out through the Mayor's Office to
14 protect tenants and the Mayor's Public Engagement
15 Unit. The Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants work
16 with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs or MOIA
17 to ensure that the full campaign was translated into
18 11 languages that are mandated under local law and
19 that the community based organizations, particularly
20 those serving immigrant communities had access to
21 these resources. The translations were distributed
22 to citywide targeted neighborhoods and that as you
23 had mentioned Chairwoman now contains social,
24 digital, ads and print media. For the mailer
25 campaigns where language targeting can be difficult,

2 they Mayor's Office to protect tenants provided
3 additional information included in the mailers to
4 make sure tenants can still access their information
5 in their preferred languages. So that's one of the
6 ways to be sure through connecting with MOIA that we
7 are able to reach out to those neighborhood
8 organizations that connect with those community based
9 organizations to better meet that population where
10 they are.

11 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Absolutely.
12 Well great, thank you. Now we've received reports
13 that HRA job centers have become understaffed. How
14 many HRA job centers are currently open per borough
15 and of those that are currently open how many are
16 fully staffed?

17 LISA FITZPATRICK: Thank you for that
18 question, Chair Ayala. All of the job centers out of
19 our borough based job centers are now open with the
20 exception of one location and that one location was
21 undergoing renovation, construction during the
22 pandemic and it hasn't been safe to reopen it to
23 clients. We have workers there but because of social
24 distancing, we are not able to have client enter in
25 that building and that's the St. Nicholas Center. So

2 all of the centers that were open prior to the
3 pandemic are now officially reopened and to the
4 public.

5 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Are they fully
6 staffed?

7 LISA FITZPATRICK: The staffing, the
8 centers are staffed. One of the things that I'd like
9 to light and actually thank the staff. During the
10 pandemic we had a lot of staff who worked with us
11 from other areas to help us to meet the surge of
12 applications and so we had the normal job center
13 staff as well as volunteers from other part of the
14 organization that helped us to interview clients and
15 do what, whatever was necessary in order to process
16 applications. So, the staffing of the centers is not
17 as much a concern. Making sure we have all the
18 resources we need and able, to be able to process
19 applications that is more important. Because today
20 we still do not see the same volume off traffic in
21 our job centers as we saw prior to the pandemic.
22 Clients have adapted to using access HRA as a means
23 of submitting applications and they're having
24 telephone interviews so there's really no reason for
25 them to go into a center unless they need that

2 special touch of additional support in order to
3 process the application. So, we have workers who are
4 available to help with the interviews and they've
5 been doing it throughout the pandemic. They still
6 continue to do it today so there isn't really a
7 concern at this point about whether or not centers
8 are fully staffed up. We just want to make sure that
9 we have all available support that we need in order
10 to process applications as they come in.

11 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: So, I'm a
12 little bit confused if we don't have the, if we don't
13 have the number of workers that are needed to do the
14 appli-, to complete applications to help with the
15 process then how are we?

16 LISA FITZPATRICK: We do.

17 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: OK.

18 LISA FITZPATRICK: We do have and so
19 that's what I'm saying, with the redeployed staff,
20 with the people volunteering to assist the regular
21 job center staff, we have enough staff available to
22 help us with the interviewing and the processing
23 needed in order to stay head of our application
24 activity. So at this point it's not a matter of
25 whether or not the centers themselves are staffed up,

2 it's whether or not there's sufficient staffing to be
3 able to handle both the application and the re-
4 certification volume. And with the assistance of all
5 of the redeployed workers who've been out there since
6 March of 2020 helping us to get this work done then
7 we've been able to do that.

8 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Are you
9 comfortable that you have enough staff to meet the
10 needs of an increase of applications should ERAP not
11 be funded?

12 LISA FITZPATRICK: Well, throughout my
13 career at the agency we've had various emergencies
14 that came up from September 11th to various
15 hurricanes and tropical storms and wherever there was
16 a need, HRA staff came together and they helped to
17 meet that need. So, I am not concerned about not
18 having sufficient staff. We've shown throughout the
19 pandemic that we can pull together our resources to
20 make sure that we can get this work done despite
21 having people on the ground, in the job centers. We
22 were able to get this work done through telephone
23 interviews and having volunteers throughout the
24 agency help us. So, they workers did not necessarily

2 have to work in a job center in order to be able to
3 provide that additional level of support.

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Understood.

5 Now, you mentioned that the number of, the foot
6 traffic has decreased at the, the different sites.
7 Do you know what percentage that decrease, I mean, I,
8 I, is it below 50%?

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: I, I don't have that
10 data here today and I don't want to speculate but it
11 is, we have definitely seen a decrease in traffic as
12 more, as more applications moved online there was
13 less need for clients to actually come into a job
14 center to submit an application. Prior to us
15 receiving the state waivers, in order to apply for
16 cash assistance, individuals had to physically come
17 into a job center, at some locations they were able
18 to submit the application through Access HRA online
19 at the center and at other times they just submitted
20 a paper application or a worker helped them to
21 complete that application. Since we got approval
22 from the state to be able to submit applications
23 remotely, we, this traffic has shifted from that in
24 person focus to now people submitting applications
25 online and having telephone interviews. This is a C

2 change for the cash assistance program, it was
3 something that we were already doing for SNAP and we
4 saw with the SNAP program with the, with the, online
5 submissions and the telephone interviews that the
6 traffic decreased dramatically. We are seeing the
7 same thing with cash assistance. This is a much
8 easier way for the public to access services. They
9 don't have to take off from work or worry about child
10 care or getting back to school to pick up their
11 children while they're waiting in an HRA facility.
12 They go ahead, they use the technology and then they
13 wait for the HRA worker to call them for an
14 interview. So this has helped to make the program
15 much easier to access throughout the pandemic and so
16 even there is another surge of applications as a
17 result of the end of the eviction moratorium, we are
18 pretty certain that we will be able to handle that
19 surge.

20 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: My concern is,
21 my concern is and I, and I appreciate that, you know,
22 we're in 2021 and that, we're, you know, we're
23 relying more and more on using, you know, online
24 resources, um, however, while DSS has maybe seen a
25 reduction offices like mine, you know, I mean we're

2 here to do that work have seen an increase in the
3 number of people that are coming into the office to
4 have the applications completed, you know, through,
5 you know, one of the case, one of the workers here
6 because they don't have access to the computer. They
7 don't feel secure enough, right, they're a little bit
8 nervous about, you know, maybe not completing it
9 correctly. Not having emails, you know, some,
10 oftentimes, and I don't know if this is the case for
11 DSS but it has been my experience that an access in
12 resources via, you know, online services, the person,
13 individual oftentimes needs to have an email address.
14 A lot of my older adults don't have email addresses
15 so it becomes a little bit difficult so I just want
16 to make sure that we're all kind of aware, you know,
17 paying attention to the unattended consequences,
18 right, that while we are seeing a reduction of, of
19 foot, of people coming into the sites physically,
20 that, you know it does, it may, you know, I don't
21 know what that means. Right. I don't know,
22 universally I don't know what it means, it could be,
23 right that more and more people are more comfortable
24 with this, this, this form of, you know, of, of
25 communicating with the agency but it also, you know,

2 very well could mean that there are people that are
3 now struggling within their own community to try to
4 find somewhere where they can get the, you know, the
5 assistance they need to fill out the applications and
6 that concerns me because during the height of the
7 pandemic, specifically with the older adult
8 population a lot of the senior centers were closed
9 and I know that when I was, you know, door knocking,
10 handing out PPE oftentimes I was doing constituent
11 services, you know, in the front of someone's door
12 because they didn't have anywhere else to go. A lot
13 of, you know, most offices were shut down. We have a
14 storefront. We were fortunate enough and we
15 represent a constituency that's, you know, in high
16 need and so we wanted to make sure that we were here
17 but I was still doing constituent services, you know,
18 in the front of people's homes because they didn't
19 have access there so I appreciate, you know this form
20 of communication and, and our ability to use
21 technology in this way because I think that, you
22 know, it's also, uh, how it can be very helpful,
23 right? I don't have to leave my home and stand
24 online and you know that there are so many benefits
25 to it but I also want us to be aware and you know and

2 realistic about the fact that there are still a lot
3 of New Yorkers that don't have, you know, access to
4 technology that are not, you know, tech savvy enough
5 to really access it in the way that we think that
6 they are and so what they're doing is then struggling
7 within their own communities, you know, to, you know
8 find someone that will do that for them.

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: I, I definitely
10 appreciate your concerns and one thing that we want
11 to constantly reinforce is that, you know, the way
12 that we're trying to convert our centers to do
13 business is a more humane approach and is actually in
14 line with the banking industry, right, like there
15 aren't very much of us that will go to a bank to
16 handle our financial transactions. The banks are
17 still available. There are still tellers that are
18 available to provide that additional level of
19 support. So it's the same with, with our job
20 centers. If we can shift the vast majority of people
21 who don't necessarily need that extra handholding.
22 If we can shift those people to the access HRA
23 technology then that frees up staff at those
24 locations to pay more attention to the people who
25 need that extra handholding. So the sites are open

2 and they are primarily open for those people need
3 that additional support. Time and time again
4 throughout my career I would go into a job center and
5 I'd have somebody who was more savvy say I don't need
6 to stand in this line to return a document to a
7 worker. I don't want to wait to speak to a worker to
8 be able to submit an application. So the technology
9 really addresses that vast majority of the people
10 that are savvy enough to use the technology to return
11 documents to, to get access to applications while
12 freeing up the services, freeing up our banks,
13 freeing up our job centers for people who need that
14 extra level of support. And so we absolutely agree
15 with you and we want to make sure that services are
16 available for those individuals who need that extra
17 touch, who need to have somebody explain information
18 to them and we've had a number of community based
19 organizations as well and partnership will, you know,
20 help clients be able to submit applications even at
21 our home based sites, we had HRA workers out
22 stationed at home base sites to be able to help
23 people when they come in for those services to also
24 initiate the cash assistance application as needed.
25 We saw it happen for SNAP and we know it can happen

2 with cash assistance as well if we shift as much as
3 possible to an online environment and that frees us
4 up to be able to spend more time with the people who
5 need extra support.

6 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Absolutely but
7 the danger in that and it's posting it, I'm putting
8 it out there is that, you know as we start to see
9 less and less people coming into the physical job
10 centers that I'm concern that this will lead to a
11 consolidation of programs and the closure of some of
12 these buildings, right, and that it would then, you
13 know, result in individuals in need having to travel
14 a lot further, to get access to those services that
15 they need and I, I'll tell you that I have, you had
16 the Food Stamp program on 14th Street, 16th Street
17 and Union Square and I have been working in this
18 office roughly 15 years and I cannot tell you the
19 number of people that come here accidentally looking
20 for that space and then when I tell them that it
21 wasn't 116 that it was 16th Street, they're like, oh
22 my God I only had enough money to get there and back,
23 right. So, that, you know that, that, I just want to
24 be mindful of that as well and, you know, and I'm
25 sure that at some point these conversations will be

2 had that if there is ever a conversation of
3 consolidation, you know, this body would love to, I
4 know that my, our members would love to be a part of
5 that conversation and we would love to see that
6 priority for, you know, sites that remain open are
7 specific to neighborhoods in the, in the highest
8 needs and with that I'm going to turn it over to my
9 colleagues because I want to give them all. I know
10 we have quite a few here and I want to give them an
11 opportunity to ask questions as well.

12 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
13 you. At this point if Council Members do have
14 question you can please use the Zoom Raise Hand
15 Function and then just to note that we are going to
16 be limiting Council Member questions and answers to
17 five minutes and the Sergeant at Arms is going to
18 keep the timer and let you know when your time is up.
19 Council Member Hudson, over to you.

20 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time begins.

21 CRYSTAL HUDSON: Okay, round two.

22 Apologies again for my earlier error. Um, so I want
23 to just note again that and just for the record that
24 residents of ZIP codes included in part or in full of
25 my district, District 35 filed more than 21,000 ERAP

2 applications including over 10,500 for rental
3 arrears, 8400 for perspective rental arrears and over
4 2500 for utility arrears and our district lost 20% of
5 its black population over the last decade and so I'm
6 very concerned about, um, further displacement of
7 black residents during what might be another eviction
8 crisis. And so as part of those folks, as part of
9 the population that I mentioned it includes older
10 adults and so I have a few questions specifically
11 pertaining to older adults. The first one is, how
12 many older adults have applied for one shot deals and
13 how many times have they needed to apply before
14 they've been approved? How does HRA conduct outreach
15 about one shot deals to older adult facilities? Are
16 there relationships established with NORKS, Older
17 Adult Centers, Home Care Providers or any other
18 organizations directly serving older adults? And are
19 there programs or grants for older adults, many of
20 whom are on severely restricted incomes where they
21 can apply to have the repayment requirement waived,
22 specifically for the one shot deal? Thank you.

23 ERIN DRINKWATER: So I'll start with some
24 of the responses on outreach. So we have an atlas or
25 advocacy and outreach that does outreach across the

2 city which includes partnerships with DIFTA, making
3 sure that information about HRA programs and services
4 is shared in both directions. So if DIFTA is working
5 with clients and they learn that a client needs some
6 of the resources provided by HRA, they will refer
7 those individuals to us and we work also to provide
8 information to DIFTA about our programs. We also have
9 with DIFTA the MAP Outreach teams, HRA also has
10 outreach teams so again making sure that we're
11 communicating to those programs through DIFTA. I
12 would have to get back to you with any partnerships
13 with any NORKS. If we are not partnering with them
14 it's a great suggestion to make sure that our flyers
15 and materials are provided in different centers for
16 older adults. In regards to the data questions and
17 the breakdown, we can get back to you on overall cash
18 assistant applications but the subset of one shot
19 data is difficult both in part because of the way
20 that the state stores the data and New York City
21 stores the data, so it's a subset of the cash
22 assistance case load. I will make a mention of a
23 local law that was passed at the end of last session
24 that will require HRA to submit a report beginning on
25 January 30th that does include information about

2 utilization of emergency assistance grants for the
3 previous quarter. So I would just say to look out
4 for that report it'll provide some additional
5 information to members of the committee.

6 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
7 you very much Deputy Commissioner and thank you
8 Council Member Hudson for your questions. Now I'm
9 going to turn to Council Member Williams for
10 questions followed by Council Member Osse. Over to
11 Council Member Williams.

12 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

13 NATASHA WILLIAMS: Hello. Thank you so
14 much Chair Ayala and to the administration for being
15 here today and of course our wonderful advocates. I
16 know Chair Ayala asked a lot of questions about the
17 outreach and so definitely wanted to second and
18 triple that effort and wanting to be supportive and
19 the question that I have is a little bit nuance. So,
20 I have a district with a lot of small landlord
21 homeowners and just wanted to know what the city is
22 doing to help them because, you know, there's,
23 there's a lot of neglected needs and sometimes they
24 have folks who have been renting and have not been
25 paying and there's a lot of compounding issues for

2 small, homeowners. So small landlords, so I just
3 wanted to know if there's, if there's any resources
4 or if the City has made any plans to help small
5 landlords?

6 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you for that
7 question Council Member. Of course at the Office of
8 Civil Justice we focus on the tenants but you're
9 absolutely right in terms of thinking about the small
10 landlords as well. Our city partners particularly I
11 think to the HPD that focuses and connects with
12 landlords but I will say that there are still
13 resources that we discussed such as the housing court
14 answers helpline which is a hotline that is run by a
15 nonprofit in partnership with the Office of Court
16 Administration. They provide information and support
17 about the housing court process and assistance as
18 you've discussed and that hotline is available to
19 landlords so that they can call and get information
20 just as it's available to tenants. The number is
21 212-962-4695 and of course we will follow with you
22 and any other members that would like to get this
23 information so that it can be available to your
24 constituent.

2 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
3 you Council Member Williams for your question and to
4 OCJ Coordinator for your response. I'm going to turn
5 now to Council Member Osse followed by Council Member
6 Lee, followed by Council Member Stevens. Over to
7 Council Member Osse.

8 CHI OSSE: Hi, good morning everyone and
9 good morning Chair. Thank you so much to the
10 administration for answering many of our questions
11 and for that wonderful testimony. The question that
12 I do have and it's a quick one but it's something
13 that I've heard from multiple constituents here in
14 the 36th District. What are some of the reasons that
15 ERAPs are denied? I know that there have been a
16 couple of instances where that has happened from some
17 of the tenants within, within the district and I just
18 wanted to hear from you about some of the reasons
19 that that may happen and then how those could be
20 appealed and the best way possible?

21 LISA FITZPATRICK: That's actually a
22 really good question Council Member. We don't have
23 that information at this time, the reasons for the
24 ERAP denials. I can tell you that I've heard
25 sometimes people don't complete the paperwork

2 properly and as a result of not submitting the
3 information through the portal appropriately then the
4 application gets denied but as far as the details
5 regarding those denials, it's a state run program and
6 because it's a state run program, New York State OTDA
7 has more information about why applications are
8 denied and I just want to say welcome. You are
9 actually the Council person for my district.

10 CHI OSSE: Oh wow.

11 LISA FITZPATRICK: So.

12 CHI OSSE: I love that.

13 LISA FITZPATRICK: It's a pleasure
14 meeting you and it's a pleasure meeting all of the
15 new Council Members as well.

16 CHI OSSE: Thank you.

17 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
18 you Council Member. I am now going to turn it over
19 to Council Member Lee for questions followed by
20 Council Member Stevens. Over to Council Member Lee.

21 LINDA LEE: Hi everyone. Thank you so
22 much Chair Ayala for putting this hearing together
23 and thank you so much to the folks from
24 Administration as well as the City Council staff
25 because I know it takes a lot of effort to put your,

2 um, testimonies and everything in order. So, thank
3 you so much and I apologize ahead of time if this was
4 already address because I had to take a couple of
5 calls and I've been running in and out so. But I
6 guess, just so you know, Ms. Fitzpatrick, my former
7 hat was in the non-profit sector working at KCS as
8 the president/CEO which we were one of the recipients
9 of the ERAP program through HRA and so we saw
10 firsthand how important this program was and we had
11 so many different folks from all different walks of
12 life that were coming in and applying for these
13 assistance programs. And I, I guess I just wanted to
14 talk more from the back end of things on the, on the
15 data collection and also database in general because
16 I know that for us, previously as providers like one
17 of the things that was frustration is that we have
18 NYC, the HRA, DOHMH, you know you have someone coming
19 in at the entry point with ERAP but then we find out
20 in assisting them that they need all of these other
21 supportive services. And so we have to input all of
22 their information and assist them through all of
23 these different portal but is there a way that HRA is
24 tracking the clients and other supportive services
25 that are needed throughout the different city

2 agencies and how is that, how's the data being
3 collected for that? Is it, is it just relying on us
4 as providers and what we think because I think that's
5 limited on what we can input or is it, is there other
6 ways that we can sort of coordinate supportive
7 services because oftentimes they may need SNAP
8 benefits, I mean not SNAP, sorry, because you guys do
9 that too but they may need for example to be
10 connected to the senior center or mental health
11 services or something else and so, I know we use
12 passport but it doesn't necessarily communicate or
13 connect all the city agencies together so is that
14 something that you guys use on your backend or what's
15 the, what's the database that you all use?

16 LISA FITZPATRICK: From the outreach
17 effort I'm not sure if Raniece can speak to this a
18 bit more but we know that in the outreach effort as I
19 testified today in the testimony that we have the PEU
20 the tenant helpline that are looking at these cases
21 holistically and they are trying to figure out if
22 client's need additional support. I'm not sure if
23 they are keeping track of that data to show that
24 there's been a handoff to another city agency, or,
25 you know, other benefits but that's not something

2 within the agency. If someone is applying for SNAP
3 and then they need cash assistance, we can see that
4 data because opening of the Cash Assistance case
5 forces the food stamp only case to close but we don't
6 look and coordinate and see what other benefits other
7 than the HRA administered benefits through W master
8 what states welfare management system, there's no way
9 for us to look across to see what other programs the
10 client is receiving so we only look at the New York
11 State Welfare Management System, benefits of Cash
12 Assistance, food stamps and medical assistance. We
13 know if people are applying for those programs but it
14 is very difficult for me to know if they are applying
15 for other assistance. Raniece, is there any
16 information that could perhaps provide about the
17 outreach effort?

18 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you. Thank you
19 Administrator Fitzpatrick. One of the things about
20 the Mayor's Office of public engagement and the way
21 that they manage it. It's just that. It is meant to
22 be a holistic approach so that it's one door to be
23 able to move and be routed to the services that are
24 needed. So, there are a number of things that a
25 person might say or think about that would cause them

2 to be routed there if a person were to call 3-1-1 and
3 once they interact with someone at that helpline that
4 individual is able to triage and understand the needs
5 of that individual to route them to HRA for instance
6 or emergency cash assistance, to connect them tenant
7 legal services if that's what's best. And the thing
8 that is special about what the public engagement unit
9 does is just that. They do track and follow what
10 happens with that particular individual to ensure
11 that the connections that they have put in place are
12 actually happening. So they make sure that that
13 individual has successfully connected and that
14 individual has a touchpoint in the PEU if, so that
15 they can follow and let them know what the status of
16 the matters are and they have an advocate at PEU that
17 can help them if they find that they are not able to
18 successfully connect.

19 LINDA LEE: Okay. And I'm so sorry. I
20 know that my time is up but I just wanted to ask a
21 really quick follow up question about the language
22 access outreach that's being done as well because I
23 think given the language access diversity in our, you
24 know, Queens alone is a bit crazy in terms of how
25 many languages are spoken across the city as well.

2 So if you could speak a little bit to the language
3 piece and which languages or how many of the 11
4 languages if all of them great, if not, how many?
5 Yeah, if you could speak to that whole?

6 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you. Any
7 communications that are tenant and public facing are
8 going out in all 11 of the local languages that are
9 mandated under local law.

10 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

11 RANIECE MEDLEY: I'm sorry. They are
12 translated either in the actual posting that's
13 available or there are links that are made available
14 so that individuals can see how to follow in a
15 different space. Such as they may be able to go
16 online and see more fully what that document looks
17 like. One thing that I would also note in terms of
18 how we make language access available. The Mayor's
19 Office to Protect Tenants for instance has translated
20 some of the court documents. For instance, the
21 notice of petition that begins an eviction case. The
22 Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants has translated
23 those documents into the 11 local law language and
24 they make it available so that an individual can even
25 call in and head that notice read to them in their

2 language of choice. So, there are all sorts of
3 things that are happening so that anything that is in
4 front of a person is available directly in that space
5 in those languages or there are very clear links to
6 where additional languages can be access for, and
7 even different types of modes of access. Thank you.

8 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
9 you so much Council Member Lee for your questions.
10 We are now going to turn over to Council Member
11 Stevens for questions.

12 SGT. MARTINEZ: Clock is ready.

13 ALTHEA STEVENS: Good morning everyone.
14 Good morning to Chair Ayala, the Administration and
15 all the advocates who do this work on a regular basis
16 so we thank you for all your efforts. I just have
17 one quick question, given the increase in the legal
18 services do the legal service providers currently
19 have capacity to provide full quality representation?
20 And if not, what can the city do about it?

21 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you for your
22 question Council Member. Our legal service providers
23 as you well know are very committed to the work that
24 we've done. We partner with established
25 organizations that have made this their life's work.

2 You know, and these organizations are stood up in
3 this base to do just that. They champion this law
4 and bring it to the floor and they are very much
5 committed to delivering on the promise and what Right
6 to Counsel requires. Since 2014, since the law went
7 into effect we know that we have served over 574,000
8 individuals with free legal services and that's in
9 housing court eviction matters as well as in NYCHA
10 Administrative Proceedings to terminate tenancy.
11 Just during the pandemic and I would be reference
12 here March of 2020 to October or 2021, we, our legal
13 service providers have been able to provide
14 representation to over 131,000 New Yorkers and that
15 comprises about 61,000 households of individuals who
16 just in that space of the peak of the pandemic were
17 able to get those services. With that, over 1/3 of
18 those individuals were able to receive full legal
19 representation so about 41.2% of those individuals
20 will receive full legal representation and I want to
21 speak to that. When the look at the Right to Counsel
22 Law the law provides that individuals below 200% of
23 the federal poverty level are going to be assigned to
24 counsel for full representation meaning they will
25 have a counsel assigned to their matter who will work

2 with them on that case throughout that matter until
3 the matter is concluded. For individuals who earn
4 more they are entitled to brief counsel or legal
5 assistance and so the providers are there to be able
6 to give case specific information to the individual
7 so that they can understand what happening and that
8 they can move forward defending it on their own even
9 if they are not able to have full legal
10 representation. What happened during the pandemic
11 because the courts noticed, the court system had very
12 much slowed down and the number of matters were very
13 limited. Our legal services actually really stepped
14 up and were able to provide full representation even
15 to some individuals above 200% of the federal poverty
16 level when they faced emergency proceedings and
17 limited proceedings that the court was actually able
18 to allow. So that was something that was able to
19 happen again because of the nature of the small
20 number of cases. Where we stand now. We have not
21 seen that the number of new eviction filings have
22 reached the same volume that they were at the same
23 time in pre-pandemic era. So we haven't yet returned
24 to that volume of new cases being filed but we also
25 are facing a number of unknowns. We don't know what

2 the rate will look like. We don't know how much it
3 will up-tick and so we are very close in contact with
4 our legal service providers and with the housing
5 court to be sure that we are paying attention to the
6 ebb and flow of cases so that we can be thoughtful
7 and creative about managing it. Because again, we
8 want to make sure that our providers feel supported
9 and that they are able to meet this need.

10 ALTHEA STEVENS: And, I'm sorry, you were
11 going to say something. I'm sorry. So like what
12 does the planning look like 'cause I know you said
13 that you guys are looking at it and with the uptick
14 but I don't feel like I was, I fully understand what
15 the actual plan is other than monitoring it. Because
16 we know that it is going to be uptick in the
17 evictions and these things and so how are we
18 preparing to get the numbers correct so that there is
19 proper representation for all people who are afforded
20 it.

21 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you. So we have
22 to be responsive and one thing I will say as I've
23 learned in my space of, of time in this role is that
24 each of the boroughs is different. The way that the
25 supervising judges of the housing courts decide how

2 they will manage the calendaring, how they will
3 manage the volume and flow of cases differs borough
4 by borough and we have a different set of providers
5 in each of the boroughs that we must work with who
6 have different needs so that we can balance it. So
7 in terms of thinking through and solutioning it's
8 something that we're in conversation about to
9 understand at a particular point in time how to best
10 meet that need and as Administrator Fitzpatrick
11 mentioned in testimony we know that providers as
12 across all sectors they're challenged with staffing
13 and staffing up and being able to onboard so as much
14 as they possess the resources to be able to bring
15 people on to rise up to meet the need there's a time
16 that is necessary to bring those people onboard and
17 to train them and bring them up to this, you know, to
18 be able to manage those cases. So, we're looking to
19 them to understand their needs. We're being
20 responsive and wanting to be as nimble as possible as
21 being able to respond to the needs of the providers
22 and we're also in conversations with the courts so
23 that they have visibility into what's happening with
24 the program and what the provider's needs are so that
25 we can think about how the court might also be able

2 to support the program and some of those concerns
3 from providers as well. Thank you.

4 ALTHEA STEVENS: Thank you very much but
5 I'm still just very concerned that if we don't have
6 the proper representation that evictions will move
7 forward but I know I'm out of time but that's a major
8 concern for me because we all know that that's a
9 violation of the Right to Counsel so we should
10 definitely be planning and making sure that we are
11 able to expand where we need to expand and pull back
12 where we need to pull back but thank you.

13 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
14 you so much Council Member Stevens. I am now going
15 to, seeing no Council Members with hands raised for
16 additional questions, I will now turn it back over to
17 Chair Ayala.

18 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Yeah, I wanted
19 to ask a question because it came through as via
20 email. Regarding going back to the job center
21 staffing, so if that is, so the question is if
22 staffing is okay why have rejections for failure to
23 complete interviews spiked to over 9,000 cases in the
24 quarter from July to September 2021 compared to 1,397
25 such rejections in March 2020?

2 LISA FITZPATRICK: Chair Ayala the data
3 regarding the failure to complete interviews is
4 really based on the process that we have in place.
5 Prior to the pandemic as I said before, clients had
6 to actually physically come into a job center in
7 order to apply or a cash assistance and have an
8 interview. With the waivers that we have in place at
9 this point, workers are able to call them to make,
10 uh, to have the interview held by telephone and that
11 means the household has to be available for that
12 telephone call. If they're not available for the
13 telephone call we do send out a message telling them
14 that they missed and call and they should get, they
15 should call HRA info line in order for the agency to
16 get back in touch with them. But it's because of the
17 telephone system that we have in place at this point.
18 If people go into the centers to have that
19 application interview then they put the client on the
20 phone with an HRA worker while they're at the
21 location to be able to complete the interview. It's
22 only those who are submitting the applications
23 remotely who there are many reasons why people miss
24 telephone interviews. Sometimes they're busy at the
25 time that we call, sometimes their phones don't have

2 minutes, so there's a lot of reasons why they might
3 miss that call but in order for the case to be logged
4 as failing to have an interview we must first call,
5 make an attempt to call that household. If HRA is
6 not calling that household we cannot log that case as
7 failing to interview. So, just want to be clear
8 about the process, it is HRA physically calling the
9 individual at the numbers that they leave for us, we
10 make two attempts, we leave the HRA info line number
11 on the application interview notification. It tells
12 them that if they missed a call then they can call HR
13 info line and we can make arrangements for that call
14 back. So that, that's currently the process.

15 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: A question
16 about the calls. So if a client is, you know, has an
17 appointment for a phone call and they're using their
18 cellphone and they've opted to block calls that are,
19 that have no known number is that, has that been, you
20 know something that has been raised as a reason for
21 why maybe people are missing those calls? Maybe
22 people are not. I don't answer my phone I don't know
23 who's calling right? And oftentimes I won't have a
24 number and I, you know, these days we're all getting
25 spams, you know, left and right so most people don't

2 pick up the phone. I mean I'm assuming if I want to
3 have an appointment at 1:00 and I got a call, you
4 know, a call at 1:00, obviously, you know, but if the
5 number is not coming through has that been an issue?

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: I mean there could be
7 many different reasons why we can't get through to
8 the household. It's difficult for us to say exactly
9 a lot of the calls are missed because people just
10 don't answer or the phone is not taking messages, so
11 there are a variety of reasons why those calls are
12 not the, why we can't connect with the client's but
13 as I said earlier, you know, the telephone interview
14 process it has been able to help us to get more
15 clients to access benefits without having to come in.
16 They can still come in.

17 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I get that, I
18 get that my concern is just like how did the spike,
19 so how did we go from 1300 to 9000, right? Like
20 something happened in between I am trying to get to
21 the bottom of like what happened in between. I am
22 trying to get to the bottom of like what happens, um,
23 is it because more people are applying that this has
24 happening right. And so we're seeing, you know, a
25 lot more, the number of people who's, you know, cases

2 that have been denied or closed, increase as well. I
3 don't know, you know, I'm trying, I'm trying to gain
4 clarity on that.

5 LISA FITZPATRICK: Chair Ayala, can you
6 please give me the dates of that, for that data
7 again, that you want.

8 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Yeah, from July
9 to September of 2021. Um, cases were 9,000, compared
10 to 1,397 rejections in March of 2020.

11 LISA FITZPATRICK: Yeah. It was the
12 application volume. It was the application volume.
13 We had a spike of applications at the height of the
14 pandemic and as a result, one of the things that we
15 heard over and over again from staff is that there
16 was a time where the state's unemployment system were
17 not working and people were first applying for
18 assistance through HRA if they couldn't get through
19 to state for unemployment insurance benefits. Once
20 they got access to unemployment insurance benefits,
21 they didn't necessarily need the HRA services their
22 unemployment was paying more than the HRA cash
23 assistance grant. So, a lot of people made that
24 first attempt to apply but then they didn't follow
25 through because the other money became available to

2 them. So the change for that particular period, the
3 change in the data was related to the surge of
4 applications that we were getting at that time.

5 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Okay. All
6 right, I want, I want to just switch a minute to
7 tenant protection. So, I know that we here in East
8 Harlem have, uh, I don't have it in the Bronx yet but
9 I do have it in the East Harlem part of my district,
10 the Tenant Support Unit services because of the, it
11 came from the rezoning in the, you know the community
12 was part of the benefits agreements. I, I find that,
13 you know, it's a really valuable resource. We've
14 greatly benefited from it and I think that we have
15 seen a reduction in the number of evictions because
16 we were able to put in a lot of resources in the
17 community to help education tenants on their rights.
18 However, during the height of the pandemic the tenant
19 support unit went virtual completely and I'm
20 wondering how, you know, was there an impact because
21 of that and, and also I'm curious to know has there
22 been an expansion of the program like have other
23 neighborhoods been selected to receive these
24 resources?

2 LISA FITZPATRICK: I'm sorry, the Tenant
3 Support Unit?

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Yeah.

5 LISA FITZPATRICK: Raniece?

6 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you. I couldn't
7 unmute. Thank you. The Tenant Support Unit is part
8 of the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit so I would have
9 to follow and defer to our colleagues there on the
10 specifics of their staffing numbers and plan and how
11 they, you know how they are planning to phase their
12 roll out but I do know that as you mentioned Chair
13 Ayala that they are very much, um, at the pulse of
14 that high touch connection with tenants and that they
15 have a number of means by which they connect with
16 tenants, peer to peer texting, phone calls, the
17 letters and even door knocking in certain instances
18 are things that they are able to result on and I know
19 that they are very nimble in being able to adjust as
20 they see the need move from different neighborhoods
21 or a particular strategy that may be needed for
22 particular, you know for a particular need at a time
23 but I don't have the specifics at this time for their
24 staffing but we're happy to follow and get that for
25 you from our colleagues.

2 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you. I
3 appreciate it. Regarding the one shot deals, do we
4 know how many people apply for one shot deals that
5 have been, that have had to apply more than once
6 before they were approved and what was the amount of
7 time between, you know, how many, how many one shot
8 deal applicants who successfully applied, you know,
9 what was the wait time was it, you know, three
10 months, four months?

11 LISA FITZPATRICK: Well we typically have
12 to make a decision on one shot deal application
13 between 30 and 45 days depending on the case type.
14 We don't keep the data by how many times people apply
15 for assistance. We reason for a re-application can
16 be you know based on a variety of factors. There are
17 times when clients are still gathering documentation
18 for the one shot and because of administrative
19 reasons well if we've gotten to the end of that
20 application period or we have to make a decision
21 between 30 and 45 days we might do what's called an
22 administrative denial. When the client has the
23 documentations we just start that application again.
24 So, we, we have to reject it for the state system
25 because it can't hang out too long without a

2 determination but when they're still working with us,
3 still submitting documents, as soon as we get the
4 documentation we go ahead and make a decision on that
5 one shot deal application. It's currently tax season
6 and sometimes people come in and they apply for
7 assistance, they have to use all available resources
8 and if you're entitled to a tax refund then that's an
9 available resource that you would have to apply for
10 before HRA would make a determination on the one shot
11 deal. So your case could be deferred until you can
12 submit verification that you've actually tapped into
13 a pension or applied for, you know, applied for your
14 taxes, some other documentation. Usually when cases,
15 when clients have to come back multiple times it's
16 because of documentation, or sometimes we just don't
17 hear from them and the case gets rejected because
18 they don't pursue the application but it's not
19 information that we keep in our data base to see how
20 many times individuals have to reapply before they
21 can get assistance. It's really on a case by case
22 basis. Some person might, some people might be more
23 proactive have all their documentation. They might
24 have gone through the process before in the past so
25 they are familiar versus the person who is not really

2 sure, who might have resources but hasn't tapped into
3 them so they might have a reason for a deferral. But
4 the application generally has to, we generally have
5 to make a decision between 30 and 45 days.

6 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Is there a cap
7 on the amount of money that a person can get through
8 a one shot deal?

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: There's no cap per se
10 but we like to say depending on what type of housing
11 the person is living in. If it's a rent stabilized
12 unit or otherwise affordable unit then we do as much
13 as possible to try to make sure that the household
14 does not lose that housing. So if someone hasn't
15 paid rent in over 12 months we'll work with them in
16 order to try to make sure, especially for our older
17 clients we will definitely work with them to try to
18 make sure that they can stay connected to housing.
19 So it's on a case by case basis.

20 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I mean we've
21 had cases here where we have had individuals go into
22 a particular home base office and try to get
23 assistance and have been told that they don't qualify
24 until they are able to bring down whatever the
25 arrears are so then they have to kind of go fish,

2 they have to go to Catholic Charities or they have to
3 go to others, you know, institutions that can help
4 with 300 here, 500 there so that they are able to
5 bring down that amount which is very, you know, is
6 difficult to do but you know, we've been able to push
7 successfully to have the arrears covered because I
8 mean, in my humble opinion I think it is more cost
9 effective to the city to just pay the arrears than to
10 have to invest in, you know, fully funding this
11 family's stay at shelter for what, you know, in these
12 days can amount to three or four years.

13 LISA FITZPATRICK: Right. Those that
14 they are using are based on the state regulation and
15 the state regulation requires people to have a future
16 ability to pay as well as using all available
17 resources in order to preserve tax payer dollars. So
18 if the family can get money from a charity or through
19 a loan from their pension or other resource, then,
20 they first have to tap into that before we will
21 provide assistance but I, I can't say I disagree with
22 you but we operate within the confines of the state
23 regulations.

24 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Understood.
25 Understood. Maybe we can do a little bit better

2 about advocating for some changes there because I
3 just, you know, we don't want to put people through,
4 you know, unnecessary stress while they are already
5 undergoing a pretty traumatic experience. You know
6 having to live with the a, you know the thought of
7 being evicted any day, you know, it's very, you know,
8 it's traumatizing. You know, I've been there, many
9 New Yorkers have been there and I, you know, it's,
10 it's just, you know, it's heartbreaking to see that.
11 You know, it just becomes more and more difficult to
12 get them connected sometimes. OK. I think I had a
13 couple of questions on CityFHEPs. How many CityFHEPs
14 move outs occurred each month disaggregated by
15 household size and by borough but each from September
16 2021 through February of 2022, you might not have it
17 but if you can get it to us that would be great. Are
18 CityFHEP vouchers automatically renewed?

19 LISA FITZPATRICK: They're not
20 automatically renewed. The CityFHEP vouchers are
21 renewed after a five period. If households simply
22 submit the renewal then the vast majority of them
23 will be renewed. Individuals over the after of I
24 believe it's 60 or 64 do not have to go through a
25 renewal process for CityFHEPs those are automatically

2 yeah, there's no, no five year period for aged
3 individuals but for all other families they have to
4 submit the renewal form and we certify those cases,
5 readily certify them and as you know, the, um, if the
6 household is now working we've changed the standard
7 so now they can earn up to 80% of the AMI so there's
8 less of a cliff for people who feel like that they
9 are not able to maintain their housing because they
10 now found a job. We want people to find jobs and we
11 want them to eliminate or reduce the need for cash
12 assistance so with this change to the AMI that now
13 gives them the ability to still have the support they
14 need to maintain housing without having to worry
15 about losing it because they found a job.

16 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Last sessions
17 we introduced, I introduced and passed Intro 1339,
18 this bill requires that DSF provide written notice to
19 all CityFHEPs voucher applicants about source of
20 income discrimination once they receiving a shopping
21 letter. Please provide an update on the
22 implementation of this bill?

23 LISA FITZPATRICK: Yeah, there's a
24 statement on the shopping letter about the source of
25

2 income discrimination. Raniece, also anything you can
3 add to that?

4 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you. That's
5 right, I know that there were efforts and that it was
6 part of it that would continue to include source of
7 income discrimination information which we already
8 had included and, you know, before the admin of the
9 bill but obviously continue to do so. To make sure
10 that individuals that hold shopping letters are aware
11 that they is support available should they experience
12 landlords who are pushing back on them. And we also
13 know that there is a source of income discrimination
14 unit within the, within DSS that is available to
15 individuals who if they should experience landlords
16 that are saying no, we're taking certain tactics to
17 persuade them from moving forward with applications
18 because we know that saying there are still many
19 landlords that are very bold in doing that,
20 surprisingly maybe but you know we also know that
21 there are other ways that landlords refuse to take
22 folks with vouchers as well and the folks in the
23 Source of Income Unit here at DSS and of course also
24 at the City Commission on Human Rights are well aware
25 of how source of income discrimination shows up and

2 they can arm individuals with information to
3 recognize that is happening and also have the ability
4 to move forward with actions or, to intervene in
5 those matters. To change nos into yeses.

6 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: What is the
7 penalty to the landlord should this, should this
8 discrimination occur?

9 RANIECE MEDLEY: That's a, that's a great
10 question. It actually, I would say the best answer I
11 have for you is that it's a case by case basis. It
12 depends on what the nature of the refusal is and how
13 it's, and how it's mated and obviously because you
14 know the highest priority is being able to connect
15 that individual with that housing opportunity. So,
16 you know the, the approach is to intervene initially
17 while that opportunity is still available, right?
18 Before the landlord could lease to someone else so
19 that we could get that landlord on board and
20 understand how they have defaulted right? Or
21 deviated from the law so that we can let them know
22 that they could be looking at litigation which is
23 going to be costly for them. They could be looking
24 at, you know other concerns in terms of restrictions,
25 reporting issues, things of that nature, so, you

2 know, those are some of the things that could be
3 brought to their, in terms of how landlords are. You
4 know, what's on the other side for landlords as, as
5 deterrents.

6 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: That's
7 fantastic but my question is, what is the number of
8 people that are actually calling into the unit? Has
9 that increased?

10 RANIECE MEDLEY: That's great. I don't
11 have, I don't have those details. I believe
12 Administrator Fitzpatrick tossed this over to me
13 because I joined DSS to actually stand up the sources
14 in the unit but I'm not running it right now so I
15 don't have those details at my fingertips but we will
16 surely follow with you and make sure that we can
17 push, you know, I know that they do, that they have
18 any number of resources and collaterals available
19 that you all can make available to your constituents
20 and then you know, to get you the information about
21 calling in, where folks can call in. But we do take,
22 my understanding is that the unit still receives
23 calls directly into the unit so that they can help
24 because again the timing is very essential in these

2 matters and there is also email referrals that are
3 available as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: No. I agree
5 which is why we introduced the bill was because of
6 the volume of constituents that were coming in here,
7 you know, that had, they had the shopping letter but
8 they couldn't find an apartment because landlords
9 were telling them that they didn't accept the voucher
10 and they hadn't been documenting what landlord, you
11 know, numbers and so, you know, in order for me to
12 better, you know, gauge whether or not the, you know
13 legislation is working right, it would be, it would
14 be great to kind of get an idea of the number of
15 people that actually are calling in to unit and
16 whether or not that number has increased.

17 RANIECE MEDLEY: Sure. Absolutely noted
18 and we will follow up with you. Thank you.

19 LISA FITZPATRICK: Chair, I just want to
20 correct what I said for CityFHEPs and the re-
21 certification. The re-certification is annual and
22 households can get CityFHEPs for up to five years if
23 they are age 60 years of age or older there's no five
24 year maximum but for those who don't fall I that
25 category they can request an extension beyond that

2 five year mark and that extension is normally
3 granted.

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Got it. Okay.
5 I don't know of any, does any, do any of the members
6 have any second round questions? Aminta?

7 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No
8 chair, it doesn't appear, it doesn't appear that any,
9 any Council Members have additional questions.

10 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Okay. So, I
11 want to close this, this part of the hearing off with
12 one question. One final question is how, what, what
13 would your recommendation be? What should we be
14 calling our constituency that they should be doing?
15 What should, what should they be doing to ensure that
16 they're meeting their responsibility to the landlord
17 by paying back rent but, you know, doing it in a way
18 that is sustainable and not for the, you know, for
19 the financial imposition on their family.

20 LISA FITZPATRICK: I can answer from my
21 perspective and then also have Raniece answer from
22 the OCJ perspective but from my perspective it's
23 about information and action. Like, information
24 without action goes nowhere. So please have your
25 constituents follow up when they get information,

2 when they get access to information through mailers
3 or through your office they have to actually do
4 something in order to protect their rights. They
5 have to actually connect with HRA if they need that
6 additional assistance and when they do connect with
7 HRA we please, please, please need them to follow up
8 and make sure that they submit the documentation. If
9 they need help getting documentation they can use us
10 as an available resource to help work with them and
11 sometimes we can get the information that they need I
12 they can't access it themselves but from the
13 perspective of, you know, cash assistance and the
14 CityFHEPs program. It really is about making sure
15 that people do follow up on the information that is
16 provided to them and Raniece if you have anything
17 from the OCJ perspective? Can somebody unmute Ms.
18 Medley? There you go.

19 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you. Thank you.
20 Thank you Administrator Fitzpatrick and I would
21 actually echo that. The first thing that I would
22 definitely urge is that as individuals receive
23 notifications from court or any notification, whether
24 from a landlord, from court or who have you that they
25 call 3-1-1 and connect to assistance to understand

2 what it is that's before them and that they stay in
3 their apartment. That's why the illegal lockout
4 campaign and the information that was pushed out
5 through PEU and the MOPT are so critical.
6 Individuals must understand that unless they have a
7 judge's signed order that has been handed or
8 presented to them by a sheriff or marshall they do
9 not have the leave that home so to stay in position
10 and to not self-evict are the best things they can do
11 before they are able to connect with anyone. The
12 other thing that I urge is that our electeds and that
13 other members of community organizations and
14 individuals definitely call 3-1-1 and the tenant
15 helpline or the HCA, Housing Court Answers Helpline.
16 Those referral processes are actually the best way
17 for individuals to be connected with the legal
18 services that they need at that particular time. I
19 know sometimes there may be an instinct that by going
20 directly to a provider, you know, there is more
21 immediate service or response but the thing is those
22 were foul streams or exactly where providers expect
23 to be able to connect with these individuals and by
24 going through those referral processes individuals
25 are able to talk to experts that are knowing how to

2 triage the cases, how to streamline those cases so
3 that people get reassurance and information that can
4 help guide them in the best way for their particular
5 cases. So, instead of trying to figure things out on
6 their own, understand, well, did I file in time or is
7 my case is too old or not. They don't have to guess
8 about that. The best thing to do is go to a resource
9 where they can be directed and get that additional
10 support. So those are things that I would definitely
11 urge. To get anything is just, as Administrator
12 Fitzpatrick said, take action, be responsive and
13 reach out to those resources that we said have been
14 made available so that they can be met with the
15 services that they need. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Ms. Medley, the
17 local law 51, that would fall under your department,
18 right?

19 RANIECE MEDLEY: That's correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Do you have
21 any, do you have any information on why the
22 implementation has taken so long?

23 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you Council
24 Member, we're at the status there where we have been
25 brought to fund that ourselves as OC-, at DSS or the

2 Administration of Social Services so, we look forward
3 to discussions, you know, with council. I know there
4 are additional hearings obviously beginning with the
5 budget season that our commissioner will be engaged
6 in, but for the work to support that Bill, we will
7 have to find the money here to support that.

8 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: No, no, no, my
9 understanding was that the program was fully funded,
10 so. Okay. So it wasn't?

11 RANIECE MEDLEY: That's my understanding.
12 That's correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Okay.

14 RANIECE MEDLEY: But I, I would say too
15 and I should have mentioned this as well, as much as
16 we do not have this additional funding in place to
17 support that work. The work is hap-, there is work.
18 There is always work that's happening around
19 education and outreach and I know that in
20 Administrator Fitzpatrick's testimony she spoke to
21 the worth for instance that PEU did at the same time
22 that this bill was going into effect which was
23 November, as you, as you well know Chair Ayala, but
24 that, you know, in November of 2021, PEU initiated
25 that massive Right to Counsel Campaign that included

2 the radio, the TV buys, the social media, and, and
3 move into the community in ethnic newspapers to be
4 sure the word was out there. The massive phone calls
5 and outreach campaigns so all of these things have
6 been part of that work and we also have this built in
7 to the work that our providers deliver just as a
8 basis of being contracted to do services through the
9 Office of Civil Justice. So it is important to note
10 that while this work the bill I should say would
11 definitely give opportunity to expand on outreach and
12 expand on education, it is a part of what happened
13 and through our collaboration with our agency
14 partners as well as calling on providers as they're
15 asked to do just in the scope of being providers
16 through the Office of Civil Justice. We are able to
17 active that as well so that we have additional
18 supports coming through. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you.
20 Thank you. I have no further questions for the Admin
21 unless any other members have. Again, last
22 opportunity to ask a second round of questions.

23 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I see
24 no Council Members with any questions at this time

2 Chair, so if it's all right with you we will move on
3 to additional public testimony?

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Yep.

5 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And
6 thank you to the members of Administration for your
7 testimony and for your responses.

8 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you guys.

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: Thank you. Thank you
10 so much. We look forward to continuing working with
11 you on these issues.

12 RANIECE MEDLEY: Thank you.

13 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We
14 will now move on to additional public testimony. As
15 a reminder, all public testimony will be limited to
16 two minutes. After I call your name please wait a
17 brief moment for the Sergeant at Arms to announce
18 that you begin before starting your testimony. And
19 please note that panelists will be able to register
20 for this hearing until three hours from the start of
21 hearing so that would be about 1:00. The next panel
22 in order of speaking will be Kathleen Kelleher,
23 Marika Diaz, Matthew Longobardi with Anna Aboody, and
24 Monsignor Kevin Sullivan. You may begin now.

2 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I would like to
3 add one, one quick, question, not a question but I
4 just wanted to say I know that, you know many of us
5 have, you know, extensive remarks we, we do have a
6 two minute time limit so if you have time, while your
7 colleagues are sharing their comments if you could
8 consolidate yours a little bit. You can always
9 submit those to the Council and we will, you know,
10 review them but just, you know, to be fair and, and
11 to try to stay on time we are asking that everyone
12 please keep it to two minutes.

13 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: A
14 full written testimony and we will certainly review
15 all of that and if you are interested in submitting
16 your testimony you can do so at
17 testimony@Council.NYC.gov. We have a lot of
18 witnesses registered to testify today. So again we
19 will now begin this panel with Kathleen Kelleher.

20 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time begins.

21 KATHLEEN KELLEHER: Thank you. Good
22 afternoon I think it is now. I'm Katy Kelleher, I'm
23 a staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society and this
24 morning or afternoon, excuse me, I'm testifying on
25 behalf of both the Legal Aid Society and the

2 Coalition for the Homeless and since we only have two
3 minutes I will just flag for you that we are
4 submitting extensive written testimony so what I'm
5 going to do now is just talk about, like, respond to
6 what I heard HRA talk about and try to hit on some of
7 the topics that I've heard the Council Members speak
8 about so far. So, on behalf of Legal Aid and the
9 Coalition for the Homeless we want to congratulate
10 Council Member Ayala for hitting the nail on the head
11 which is that the problem that we're facing with the
12 eviction mor-, the end of the eviction moratorium is
13 that it is really a long term housing affordability
14 crisis and so the first thing that we want to
15 highlight that we think that the Council could take
16 action on is that the Council really needs to act to
17 expand eligibility for CityFHEPs to all rent burdened
18 New Yorkers with incomes below 200% of the federal
19 poverty to really address the crisis. We've heard
20 some about ERAP this morning and also about one shot
21 deals but those are really just filling in the crisis
22 gap, they don't address the affordability issue and
23 since we do, the federal government has not solved
24 the problem in terms of making section 8 vouchers
25 available, widely available the city is really going

2 to be forced to act. We think that CityFHEPs should
3 be reformed in three ways, first the requirement
4 should be eliminated that families must have lived in
5 the shelter system for at least three months and have
6 received, or have received an eviction notice and
7 previously lived in a shelter in order to qualify.
8 Enable burdened New Yorkers with income below 200% of
9 poverty to qualify for CityFHEPs and eliminate
10 unnecessary documentation requirements and streamline
11 the Administration so payment can be issued within
12 four weeks.

13 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time's up.

14 KATHLEEN KELLEHER: Is that, did I hear
15 time. I'm going to say two other topics. I'm just
16 going to literally say what the topic headings are
17 and I would invite, I would appreciate if you would
18 ask me questions because I actually would like to
19 respond to Administrator Fitzpatrick's testimony with
20 respect to the incredible spike in rejection of
21 applications to over 9,000. So I would really
22 appreciate questions on that but I just want to, the
23 other two areas that our written testimony focuses on
24 area the extensive barriers faced by clients when
25 they apply to HRA and the third area is that the

2 COVID 19 crisis has taught us that there are changes
3 that need to be made in the shelter system
4 permanently to ease the crisis for homeless New
5 Yorkers. So, with that I, I guess I have to end my
6 testimony. Thank you.

7 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
8 you Katy for your testimony. We are now going to
9 move to Marika Diaz for her testimony.

10 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time begins.

11 MARIKA DIAZ: Good morning committee.
12 I'm here on behalf of the Section 8 project at the
13 Evan Justice Center. I am the director there and on
14 the steering committee of the Right to Council NYC
15 Coalition. You know, at the City level right now we
16 have a huge problem for the City's Right to Council
17 initiative which is really one of the key
18 interventions is standing between New York City
19 tenants and mass displacement. The National Labor
20 Shortage that we are experiencing as Right to Counsel
21 providers is really impacting our ability to deliver
22 the services and we are currently carrying
23 unprecedented caseloads that have accumulated during
24 the pandemic. This is really a disastrous
25 combination when you add it to the fact that we have

2 a court system that is determined to run through
3 thousands of cases without regard for the essential
4 due process right for tenants and the fact that we
5 can't keep up with the demand for services no matter
6 how hard we try. And so the result of this is going
7 to be the tenants will miss out on Right to Counsel,
8 they will get evicted and they will be rendered
9 homeless. So we really need the City's Office of
10 Civil Justice to coordinate more closely with the
11 court to push for a flow of cases that matches the
12 legal provider capacity and we need the City to
13 defend it's Right to Counsel Law as a due process
14 right that it is and to do everything in its powers
15 to ensure that Right to Counsel can prevent mass
16 displacement. It is also obviously essential to
17 immediately implement local law 53 as we've heard
18 from a number of speakers. In addition, our One Shot
19 Deal system needs to be reformed to meet the moment
20 and ensure that New York City tenants aren't
21 displaced. That will include eliminating the future
22 ability to pay requirement, simplifying the
23 application process, ensuring language and disability
24 access. Ensuring a rent relief for undocumented New
25 Yorkers likely post Super Storm Sandy because they

2 aren't one shot eligible and raising the levels of
3 funding available to households. The City also needs
4 to reduce CityFHEPs processing time and eliminate the
5 rent reasonable list requirements and also finally
6 just on the question of homelessness because I see
7 I'm out of time. We really need our City
8 Administration to immediately move away from the
9 current approach to homelessness which is one of
10 scapegoating, criminalizing and policing. Given the
11 eviction crisis is a part and unhelpful and
12 furthermore we have 3/4 of applications applied that
13 are denied and thousands of homeless families are
14 stuck in a city designed churning process that is
15 exhausting and traumatizing. DSS has to reduce the
16 bureaucratic barriers for folks to get in shelter.

17 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time's up.

18 MARIKA DIAZ: And immediately guarantee
19 stabilization for homeless New Yorkers.

20 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
21 you

22 MARIKA DIAZ: Thank you.

23 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
24 you Marika for your testimony. I'm now going to move

2 to Matthew Longobardi and Anna Aboody to testify. I
3 believe they will be testifying together.

4 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time is ready.

5 MATTHEW LONGOBARDI: I think we each
6 wanted two minutes. But, good afternoon I'm Matthew
7 Longobaradi I'm a senior staff attorney at
8 Mobilization for Justice and a member of the
9 Coalition of Legal Service Providers and we are also
10 a member and support of the Right to Council NYC
11 Coalition. Currently my colleagues and I are feeling
12 an immense pressure of the flow of eviction cases
13 moving through court and we are urging this committee
14 to work with the Office of Civil Justice and the
15 Office of Court Administration to manage the amount
16 of cases being calendared in Housing Court. Only
17 cases where tenants are currently represented by
18 Council should move forward, other cases should be
19 adjourned until legal service providers like MFJ have
20 additional capacity. We are approaching caseloads
21 that will interfere with our ability to provide the
22 zealous and competent representation that our
23 existing clients deserve. Those caseloads will also
24 interfere with the rights my unionized colleagues and
25 I were members of the Legal Services Staff

2 Association have under our collective bargaining
3 agreement. We have the right to caseloads that allow
4 us to provide robust and ethical legal services and
5 our clients and your constituents deserve. High
6 caseloads undermine the effectiveness of the Right to
7 Counsel Program by failing the tenants we current
8 represent. They also cause burnout and attrition
9 among legal services staff which will impact the
10 quality of representation for tenants under the Right
11 to Counsel program for years to come. Additionally,
12 as caseloads swell, my colleagues and I have even
13 less capacity to offer tenants the holistic services
14 that are necessary to enforce their right beyond the
15 defense of an eviction. Currently, we have
16 significant less time for taking on new HP
17 proceedings limiting our ability to assist tenants
18 with enforcing their rights to habital housing and to
19 be free from harassment. For all the reasons it is
20 essential that cases in housing court only move at
21 the speed in which legal service providers with
22 capacity and cases where tenants do not currently
23 have counsel need to be adjourned. Thank you.

24

25

2 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
3 you Matthew for your testimony. We are now going to
4 move to Anna Aboody for testimony.

5 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time begins.

6 ANNA ABOODY: Good morning. My name is
7 Anna Aboody and I'm a staff attorney at Mobilization
8 for Justice in the Bronx. Thank you for the
9 opportunity to testify today. While the eviction
10 moratorium expired just six weeks ago the negative
11 impact on tenants and legal service providers has
12 been overwhelming. Perhaps the most notable impact
13 and what I'd like to bring your attention today has
14 been a misplaced urgency with which the court is
15 trying to hear new cases. Instead of prioritizing
16 existing cases wherein both parties have
17 representation, the court is prioritizing newly filed
18 cases where tenants do not have counsel. Because
19 these cases are appearing before the court for the
20 first time in what's commonly referred to as the
21 intake part, tenants are supposed to be given the
22 opportunity to connect with the legal service
23 provider. Since the eviction moratorium expired
24 cases from these parts have been moving through the
25 court system at fully unmanageable speeds. Cases are

2 being scheduled at rates that far exceed our capacity
3 as a legal service organization. When MFJ is the
4 legal service provider on a duty in an intake part we
5 are responsible for contacting each tenant who's case
6 is on the calendar. The goal is to inform the tenant
7 of their Right to Counsel and the opportunity for
8 free legal representation. Unfortunately there is
9 still a significant amount of confusion for tenants
10 about how they are required to appear in intake
11 courts. If a tenant does not appear for their
12 initial court date the provider assigned to the
13 intake part is frequently left with nothing more than
14 the tenant address in order to contact them. This
15 makes the likelihood of connecting with the tenant
16 very low. Moreover, given the high number of cases
17 that are being scheduled in court, our resources as a
18 legal service provider are often tied up in contact
19 tenant and conducting intake. Simply put, tenants
20 are entitled to information about their right to
21 counsel and should have the opportunity to connect
22 with an attorney at these appearances but legal
23 service providers are being charged with the near
24 impossible task and time consuming task of performing
25 outreach to many tenants that often yields few

2 results because so many cases are being calendared so
3 quickly.

4 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time.

5 ANNA ABOODY: A colleague of mine
6 recently compared the situation legal service
7 providers are being faced with right now to the
8 overburden and understaffed hospitals at the height
9 of the pandemic with limited resources, no end of
10 sight to the very sick patients walking through their
11 doors and an obligation to help just about everyone.
12 This is a fairly accurate analogy. However, unlike
13 the overburdened ERs and ICUs throughout the pandemic
14 who had no control over the number of people
15 requiring care on any given day, the Office of Court
16 Administration does not and should not carrying on as
17 if they have no choice but to calendar as many new
18 cases as possible now that the moratorium has
19 expired.

20 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time is expired.

21 ANNA ABOODY: The decision to do is
22 calculated discriminatory and harmful to tenants,
23 legal service providers and the court staff alike.
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you.

2 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
3 you Anna for your testimony. Our final speaker in
4 this panel will be Monsignor Kevin Sullivan.

5 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

6 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: He's
7 muted. Can somebody unmute the Monsignor, please?

8 MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: Thank you for
9 the opportunity and I will not repeat what the
10 previous panelists have said. I just want to speak
11 to three particular areas. One, how services are
12 delivered, how we help people to avoid eviction.
13 Hotlines, helpless are very, very important. The
14 City's helpline is critically important, however, in
15 person sites in neighborhoods where people can walk
16 in and talk to a real human being are also critically
17 important. For that Catholic Charity, we instituted
18 just last week that all of our neighborhood offices
19 are going to be open five days a week in person. We
20 may stagger the work schedule but they are going to
21 be open five days a week. Home base, other sites,
22 that is critically important to make sure that that
23 happens. Secondly, at the end of the day we have a
24 crisis of affordable housing. Therefore, if we want
25 to deal with it, capital funding is critical to make

2 sure that there is more than temporary help to what
3 is going on, so that is the second point. The third
4 point which a number of people have spoken to is that
5 of affordability. And let me suggest to this
6 committee and to its chair that this committee put
7 forth a policy proposal to New York City which
8 initially may not cost any money but sets a direction
9 that we should be setting as our policy in New York
10 City. And I phrase it very, very simply. The policy
11 of New York should be that no New York household
12 who's income is less than 200% of New York City's
13 poverty level should pay more than 30% of their
14 income for rent. This can be achieved by . . .

15 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

16 MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: . . . vouchers,
17 rental assistance or even refundable tax credits.
18 That policy aspiration should then guide all of our
19 assistance programs to make sure that every single
20 New York City household doesn't become rent poor.
21 Madam Chair thank you for the opportunity to testify
22 before your committee.

23 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you.

24 Thank you so much Monsignor and thank you so much to
25 Catholic Charities for your consistency. I couldn't

2 tell you how many of my constituents actually have
3 utilized your resources and found them to be very
4 helpful. And I agree. I think that creation of a
5 new voucher program is essential because, you know,
6 there is a housing crisis in New York City and it has
7 been here for many, many years. I, I benefited from
8 section 8 and you know what was then the Jetis
9 [phonetic] program which is now, you know, a form of
10 the FHEP program. But it helped my family
11 tremendously, you know, we, we, we often talk about
12 affordable housing but there's a need for affordable
13 housing and there's also an even bigger need for
14 subsidized housing and we unfortunately don't speak
15 enough to that. And so I, I hope to be able to
16 change that conversation in my time in leadership in
17 this committee and I want to first apologize to all
18 of the panelists because I will not be able to ask
19 everyone a question and it's not because you know
20 it's not of interest to me. I know many of you, I've
21 fortunately been able to sit with many of you and I
22 know of the great work that you do but we have over
23 35 panelists that are registered to speak and it just
24 becomes impossible. But I did have, I just want you
25 to know that, you know, we're not trying to, to shive

2 you or anything. We really appreciate your coming
3 here today and if you can submit your written
4 testimony, I promise to review it. I've heard many
5 great ideas. I am not an expert on all things. I do
6 bring life experience to this committee which I think
7 is important as a person who has been housing
8 insecure several times in my life. But that doesn't
9 render me an expert on all matters and so I will be
10 relying heavily on your expertise to help guide the
11 policies that we create and the work that we do
12 through this committee in a way that is really
13 meaningful to New Yorkers. But I do have a question
14 for Kathleen regarding the rejections. Why do you
15 think that the rejections are so high for interview
16 that allow for the numbers to spike to over 9,000.

17 KATHLEEN KELLEHER: While there are a
18 number of reasons but one of the reasons is that
19 there are two issues. One is that Administrator
20 Fitzpatrick acknowledged that there are lots of
21 reasons why people miss a phone call except you can't
22 get a renters grant of any kind of public assistance
23 without a mandatory interview and they are happening
24 by phone and in pre-COVID days, back in the day
25 people got a phone call from HRA and they could call

2 back. And you know, that somebody could leave a
3 message saying like, this is your worker, you know,
4 Ms. Jones call me back. Now, they get a message that
5 says sorry you missed our call, you need to call info
6 line. So basically what it means that, like, you
7 acknowledged Chair Ayala people who don't answer
8 their phone because they don't answer unless they
9 know who it is. They see, oh, they listen to the
10 voicemail and they go oh my gosh that was HRA, let me
11 call back, let me hit redial. Guess what, the redial
12 doesn't work and calling info line means, info line
13 is one centralized number that itself needs to be
14 reformed. People can wait for literally over an hour
15 on hold to talk to a generic phone agent. When they
16 do talk to that agent what happens is they are told
17 they are going to get another call to just wait for
18 another call it's not scheduled. The exact same
19 thing happens again so oftentimes it takes days and
20 days to tie that loop to actually make this happen
21 and HRA is actually not giving people. They're not
22 calling from phones that can be called back. They're
23 not treating people like actual humans. I mean I do
24 appreciate that the city and city workers are, you
25 know, do try to do their jobs but using technology

2 putting people up against like a massive phone line
3 is, it's a system designed to fail and the same thing
4 is true that, and these are people you only get
5 scheduled for a phone interview if you've
6 successfully filed an application. And as
7 Administrator Fitzpatrick acknowledged they are
8 really trying to get people to use the automated
9 system known as Access HRA. And we agree that people
10 should be able, that Access HRA is a great
11 alternative for people who can do it but only, but
12 there are 30% of New Yorkers according to a study
13 that former Controller Strainer published, 30% of New
14 Yorkers lack broadband access to the internet. So
15 that's 30% of New Yorkers do not have access to the
16 main way that HRA wants them to apply. Right. So
17 that automatically knocks them out of the box. So,
18 let's think about the idea that over 9,000 people
19 were rejected and those were people who already
20 jumped over the hurdle of somehow getting their
21 application filed. Think of all the people who
22 didn't manage to even get through the first hurdle
23 and get their application filed. So the other thing
24 that HRA is really missing on is that having job
25 centers follow a bank model is really not, it's not

2 appropriate. If HRA is a human services agency and
3 it needs to be prepared to serve people as
4 individuals in person not act like a bank ATM lobby
5 which is what they do now. They have been, job
6 centers have been converted into automated self-
7 service models. I don't know if you caught when
8 Administrator Fitzpatrick answered your question
9 about interviewing clients what she said is if a
10 client comes to a job center we sit them, we put
11 them, we connect them to a phone. So, in other words
12 they don't even interview the person personally.
13 They sit them in a cubicle and hand them a phone and
14 the other thing they do is if you show up at a job
15 center and say I tried to apply and it didn't work
16 for me, I need help. They put you at a computer
17 carol, they call them PC Banks and they tell you to
18 apply online. So, what's crazy is about that is a
19 huge percentage of the people who are going to HRA
20 job centers are people who are there to say I tried
21 to do it online and I couldn't do it. I don't
22 understand how to do it. So, the shift that HRA has
23 made to the self-service lack of individualized
24 assistance is a gigantic failure and those numbers
25 reflect that and so HRA needs to fix that and the

2 other thing is that even for people, there certainly
3 are people who can use info line. There definitely
4 are but one of the, there are even more people who
5 could use it if they had real time help. One of the
6 things that is different between HRA and your bank or
7 Con Ed or Verizon is that if you try to go online and
8 pay a bill and you need help, there are ways that you
9 could get help with online services. You can call
10 them. There is usually an online chat feature.
11 Somebody can help you navigate. Oh, you can't find
12 your password, let me help you reset it. HRA lacks
13 real time technical help. There is no assistance for
14 Access HRA, none. Zero and the, if you want to see
15 witness of that you can look on the mobile apps. If
16 you look in the app store there is a technical
17 assistance. You can look in the Q and A sessions and
18 there are questions there that are posted by clients.
19 I actually put one of these in my testimony. One of
20 them was from a client who said I'm trying to do
21 this, it's really confusing, I've been calling
22 repeatedly, I don't understand. The response from
23 HRA 12 days later was thank you for your comment,
24 please send us an email. So I think it's an
25 automated bot that responded, so HRA needs to provide

2 online assistance for that too. They need to fix
3 their centralized phone system so that people can
4 reach them by phone. They need to provide
5 individualized phone numbers that people can call
6 them back and they need to provide the technical
7 assistance and they need to provide real alternatives
8 to applying online. So, I'm sorry like it took a
9 long time to answer but I really want, I'm afraid
10 that my time is going to be up and I really . . .

11 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I saw a lot of
12 nodding, I saw a lot of nodding heads so I mean that
13 there is consensus amongst the group along with the
14 recommendations and the agreement on some of the
15 hurdles that are making it really difficult for
16 people to access services. You know, I've seen it,
17 we see it, you know we have an influx of people
18 coming in and you know, we we're able to troubleshoot
19 but if we were not here if our office had gone remote
20 then my fear is that, you know, and that was one of
21 the reasons why we opened and we were one of the
22 first offices to open and remain open throughout the
23 pandemic was because a lot of people needed access to
24 a copy machine, they needed a scanner to scan
25 document, not everybody has a smart phone, not

2 everyone knows how to use a smart phone, hello, my
3 included. So, it become you an impediment, just a
4 further barrier to accessing resources that are well
5 intended, right. That are there within a person's
6 reach we sometimes make it difficult for them in ways
7 that, you know, we shouldn't. So I really appreciate
8 that. Thank you so much. And we're going to move on
9 to the next panel because I want to be mindful of
10 everyone's time. Thank you so much.

11 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
12 you to this entire panel for your testimony. We are
13 now going to move on to the next panel. I also just
14 want to flag that there sometime is a few seconds
15 delay in your being unmute so just please be patient
16 with us on that. The next panel will be in the order
17 of speaking, Jenny Laurie, followed by Eric Lee
18 followed by Eric Rosenbaum, followed by Josefa Silva.
19 And we are going to begin with Jenny Laurie.

20 SGT. MARTINEZ: It's ready.

21 JENNY LAURIE: Thanks very much. My name
22 is Jenny Laurie, I'm the Executive Director of
23 Housing Court Answers. Housing Court Answers is a
24 member of the Right to Counsel New York City
25 Coalition. I want to specially thank Council Member

2 Ayala you have always been so really great, terrific
3 on housing justice issues since you were first
4 elected and we all recognize you as a leader in this
5 work. Housing Court Answers in partnership with the
6 Office of Civil Justice staffs a hotline for tenants
7 facing eviction. Tenants can call the number on
8 their court papers to reach us and our hotline staff
9 can connect those tenants with cases to an attorney
10 provided under the city's Right to Counsel Law.
11 Right to Counsel at this point as we've all be
12 talking about is really the only thing standing
13 between 10s of thousands of tenants and eviction.
14 Our hotline has gotten super busy since the
15 expiration of the moratorium on January 15th.
16 Somedays we get over 600 calls compared to 100 or
17 less a hundred a day at the beginning of the
18 moratorium. I hope that Council will ask the
19 Administration how many tenant are calling 3-1-1 with
20 eviction cases because I'm sure their numbers are
21 super high as well and I'm curious to know how well
22 they respond to those calls. As we have heard from
23 previous testimony, tens of thousands of tenants now
24 fact eviction for non-payment of rent, some of them
25 are in court and some of them are not yet in court.

2 And there are some partial solutions to the current
3 crisis and I'm repeating what other have said just
4 because I think if we all repeat it maybe it will
5 happen. Full funding for Right to Counsel both for
6 the provision of legal representation and for the
7 organizing work that was mandated under Local Law 53
8 to convince tenants not to give up their homes
9 without a fight, pressure the Housing Court to slow
10 the progress of cases so that every tenant who is
11 eligible gets proper full legal representation. The
12 current pace of calendar cases is surpassing the
13 ability of legal service providers to deal with it
14 and then finally as others have said, streamline the
15 CityFHEP and the one shot deal process. Some of our
16 tenants to access rental assistance. Thank you very
17 much.

18 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
19 you very much for your testimony Jenny. We are going
20 to move to Eric Lee for testimony followed by Eric
21 Rosenbaum. Over to Eric Lee.

22 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

23 ERIC LEE: Hi, good afternoon my name is
24 Eric Lee. I'm Director of Policy and Planning for
25 Homeless Services United. Congratulations on Chair

2 Ayala on your leadership of the General Welfare
3 committee and thank you for the opportunity to
4 testify. I'll summarize my written testimony here.
5 To meet the overwhelming need for arrears we urge the
6 Council to call upon Governor Hochul to commit the \$2
7 billion in unallocated Federal Pandemic Relief Funds
8 to fund ERAP. On the city level, expanding access to
9 one shot deals can also help with arrears. We
10 recommend re-introducing Intro 2172 to remove future
11 ability to pay as an eligibility requirement and to
12 Council Member Hudson's comment around recruitment we
13 recommend the Council urge the Governor and UTBA to
14 remove the recoupment clause from what I feel is from
15 state statute. Housing resources like One Shot, City
16 and State FHEPs and EHV vouchers are only effective
17 if there is enough staff at both government and non-
18 profit providers to be able to help people quickly
19 access those resources. The City should exempt from
20 the 3% proposed pegs across the board included in the
21 Mayor's Preliminary Budget. Staff at HPD, NYCHA,
22 DHS, HRA and DYCE, runaway and homeless youth that are
23 all working to address the crisis of homelessness.
24 HSU is extremely grateful to Chair Ayala and members
25 of the Council for passing Intro 146 last session

2 raising CityFHEPs to FMR and the Council must hold
3 DHS and HRA budgets harmless to ensure that both
4 agencies are not shorthanded and do not need to rely
5 on redeploying volunteers to be able to process the
6 additional applications. A partial response
7 diminishes the anticipated need and could catch both
8 agencies flatfooted when it outstrips the limited
9 staff capacity. The Council should also direct
10 additional funding to NYCHA and HPD departments
11 responsible for processing EHV vouchers. We
12 recommend . . .

13 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

14 ERIC LEE: . . . we'd recommend the
15 Council fund the request of Human Services Council's
16 Just Pay Campaign to increase the low wages of the
17 non-profit workforce and we also urge the city to
18 strike the rent reasonableness and utility deductions
19 from CityFHEPs. Providers have already seen
20 households lose permanent housing placement due to
21 rent reasonableness even when it is below FMR and in
22 closing we also urge the Council to address the
23 Mayor's Preliminary Budget which did not include any
24 funding for Affordable Housing or increased cost to
25 rental assistance. Thank you.

2 AMITRA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
3 you Eric for your testimony. Now going to move to
4 Eric Rosenbaum followed by Josefa Silva. Over to
5 Eric Rosenbaum.

6 SGT. MARTINEZ: Clock is ready.

7 ERIC ROSENBAUM: Thank you. I'm the CEO
8 of Project Renewal a New York City homeless services
9 nonprofit. I'm grateful to Chair Ayala and the
10 entire City Council for your support of our programs.
11 For 55 years we've provided shelter, housing,
12 healthcare and employment services to hundreds of
13 thousands of New Yorkers who are experiencing
14 homelessness and a special focus on those affected by
15 mental illness, substance use and criminal justice
16 involvement. In the 10 years before the pandemic and
17 the eviction moratorium, the single adult shelter
18 system was rising by 1000 people a year and the
19 length of stay was steadily increasing. That's the
20 equivalent of 50, 200-bed shelters needed just to
21 accommodate the growth. I applaud the increase in
22 the value of the FHEPs vouchers because that helps
23 people compete for the very limited supply of
24 affordable units but those vouchers aren't creating
25 housing by themselves so they are only a stop gap

2 measure. Almost all the plans that can increase
3 production of ultra-low income affordable and
4 supported housing won't have an impact on supply in
5 the next three to four years because it takes so long
6 to acquire sites and get financing and build. So
7 it's not fast enough to help the dramatic imbalance
8 between supply and demand. To avoid an explosion of
9 homelessness, we have to look at all ways to increase
10 housing capacity in the next two weeks. We wrote
11 last year in a policy paper that hotel conversions
12 could create thousands of safe, highly affordable and
13 supportive units at a much lower cost than new
14 construction and get people in apartments within two
15 years with rent stabilized leases. HPD master lease
16 can fund those conversions without requiring
17 additional or much additional capital funding because
18 the rental subsidies become lateral and then allows
19 for 100% debt financing. That means that these FHEPs
20 vouchers would be funding new permanently affordable
21 housing instead of just subsidizing existing
22 landlords. The previous administration stopped those
23 conversion effort and now the window is kind of
24 shrinking. And in the meantime the city could help
25 alleviate the bureaucratic challenges including

2 staffing shortages that delay filling the 60
3 vacancies that we have today at our 1000 supported
4 housing units. Getting approval for a housing
5 package takes months.

6 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time is expired.

7 ERIC ROSENBAUM: Last month we opened a
8 brand new supported housing building in Bedford Park
9 with 118 units, as of today we've filled 26. We
10 could cut the time to fill the rest by two to three
11 months if the approval process were faster. I'm
12 grateful that we are now allowed to make some direct
13 connections between our shelter clients and our own
14 housing vacancies. We want to see that expanded. I
15 just close by saying if we have to fight battles to
16 house New Yorkers I'd rather be fighting the battles
17 to create housing than for more shelter. Thank you
18 for giving me the opportunity to testify and I
19 welcome any questions.

20 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
21 you Eric for your testimony before moving to the
22 final panelist for this panel, Josefa Silva. I just
23 want to call the next panel as well so folks can have
24 a head's up that you will be up next. The following
25 panel will be Amy Blumsack, followed by Sarah Wilson,

2 followed by Beatrice Simpkins followed by Andy Aujla
3 followed by Jesenia Ponce. I am now going to call
4 Josefa Silva to be the last panelist. You are over
5 to Josefa.

6 SGT. MARTINEZ: Clock is ready.

7 JOSEFA SILVA: Thank you. Good
8 afternoon. I'm the Director of Policy and Efficacy
9 for WIN. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
10 and for the attention and work that the Council is
11 doing to keep people in their homes. WIN is New York
12 City's largest provider of shelter and permanent
13 supportive housing for families with children who
14 have experienced homelessness. We operate 13 family
15 shelters and 365 units of permanent supportive
16 housing. In total, we served more than 9,000
17 individuals last year. One of the reasons that WIN
18 exists is that New York City has a shortage of
19 housing that is affordable to the lowest income New
20 Yorkers. For the pandemic and Fiscal Year '19 600 of
21 the families in WIN shelter were there just in WIN
22 shelter because of eviction. Those of us in family
23 homelessness remember when in desperation DHS turned
24 to unsafe cluster sites and commercial hotels to
25 shelter families with children because the need

2 overwhelmed the capacity of the shelter system. We
3 fear a return to those days as an influx of people
4 turn to shelter in the aftermath of the expiration of
5 the moratoriums. There's no doubt that the eviction
6 moratorium was a necessary emergency intervention but
7 we need a long term solution and that solution is an
8 expanded rental assistance program. CityFHEPs has
9 the potential to mitigate housing vulnerability but
10 none of New Yorkers are able to use this key
11 solution. There are three areas of reform that would
12 fix this. First, it's time to use the voucher to
13 prevent evictions. Currently CityFHEPs is targeted
14 to helping New Yorkers leave homelessness by
15 expanding access to CityFHEPs for people facing
16 eviction before they lose their home. We would
17 prevent homelessness in the first place. Secondly
18 New York City needs to improve it's systems and
19 administration of the CityFHEPs vouchers while also
20 working with landlords to build participation. At
21 WIN we see families lose apartments because of long
22 processing times on the applications, delays on
23 apartment inspections and approvals. Late payments
24 to landlords and other administrative issues.
25 Finally New York City has to step up enforcement so

2 that landlords can't discriminate against families
3 who use vouchers. WIN joins neighbors together and
4 other advocates to call for a \$1 million increase in
5 this year's budget for a source of income unit at the
6 commission on human rights. Thank you again for your
7 time and attention, we look forward to working with
8 you in the coming months to help New York's most
9 vulnerable families.

10 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
11 you Josefa for your testimony and that concludes this
12 panel. I will now call. Go ahead, Chair Ayala.

13 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Regarding the
14 number of individuals and I'm asking because several
15 of you have brought it up due to the inability to pay
16 future rent. Do we know what that number is? Does
17 anyone know? No, Eric maybe? Can somebody unmute
18 Eric please?

19 ERIC LEE: With regard to inability to pay
20 I think HRA has that information because that's how
21 they would determine whether or not they would allow,
22 whether they would grant the one shot deal, because
23 they would be like if you don't have future ability
24 we're not going to the . . .

2 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Understood but
3 several of you brought it up as something I need to
4 change, are you seeing an increase in the number of
5 clients that have been denied for that reason?

6 ERIC LEE: I think it's just a long-
7 standing challenge of trying to access rental
8 assistance and given the idea if we can try to ensure
9 that given the need that we are able to then get more
10 people to be able to qualify of it. That's how we're
11 going to get people to be able to remain in their
12 homes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Perfect. Okay
14 and do we know, what is your experience and I'm not
15 this is for anyone on the panel on the, the length of
16 time for inspections, when you say delay like what is
17 that a, is that, are they delayed by a month. I
18 would imagine that during the COVID pandemic those
19 delays were even longer?

20 JOSEFA SILVA: We, you know the
21 inspection times and delays vary hugely which is also
22 one of the challenges is that there isn't always a
23 clear expectation of what the timeline and the
24 process is. During the pandemic itself, inspections
25 were handled remotely. There were videos, there were

2 ways to use video and such to conduct inspections.
3 Those have si-, that's no longer how they're being
4 done.

5 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Okay. Thank
6 you. Thank you guys.

7 JENNY LAURIE: I just want to raise one
8 other issue which is tenants who apply for a one shot
9 deal if they're, if they have a subsidy and they got
10 behind anyway they've applied for ERAP they've been
11 told basically they're not going to receive the funds
12 from ERAP because they're subsidized but they also
13 can't go forward on their one shot deal. I don't
14 think it's a huge problem but there are people who
15 have applied for one shots in the first round who are
16 going to, basically are getting rejected that can't
17 go forward with their one shot deal application.

18 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: That's
19 interesting. Thank you so much and I wanted to just
20 add thank you for Housing Court Answers. Actually
21 taught me so much when I was doing constituent
22 services way back when. I found that they are very
23 useful tools so thank you very much.

24

25

2 JENNY LAURIE: Oh sure, as I've said
3 you've been such a terrific leader on these issues,
4 we really appreciate it.

5 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you.
6 Okay, we can move on to the next panel.

7 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL:
8 Thanks again to this entire panel. Moving on to the
9 following panel which will be speaking in the
10 following order, Amy Blumsack, Sarah Wilson, Beatrice
11 Simpkins, Andy Aujla and Jesenia Ponce. Beginning
12 now with Amy Blumsack.

13 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

14 AMY BLUMSACK: Hi good afternoon. My name
15 is Amy Blumsack I am the director of Organizing and
16 Policy at Neighbors Together. Thank you so much for
17 the opportunity to speak today and Chair Ayala thank
18 you for leading us in the right direction and I look
19 forward to continuing to work with you. I just want
20 to say I echo what so many others have said. I'm
21 going to try and focus on a few things that have been
22 talked about less. Obviously we have run out of ERAP
23 money that we didn't get enough to cover people who
24 need assistance. Although this is obviously a City
25 Council hearing there are two bills that are going to

2 be really important at the state level, the Housing
3 Access voucher program. And the Cause Eviction.
4 These will both lift people out of homelessness,
5 right? Prevent people from falling in who are at
6 risk for eviction and then also give unregulated
7 tenants protection so that they can also not fall
8 into eviction by creating a floor for them of rights.
9 And so those are going to be critical to sort of cap
10 on both ends, the homelessness crisis and, yeah, New
11 York City has large influence at the state level in
12 terms of homelessness and so I really want to
13 recommend that the Council, the Mayor, the
14 Administration continue to be equal supporters of
15 these two bills at the state level particularly as
16 the budget season is coming to an end at the state
17 level. Additionally I really want to echo that CCHR,
18 the SOI unit, their source of income unit needs \$1
19 million in funding at minimum. They have been such a
20 huge resource to our members. They have literally
21 helped people get housing when they struggled for so
22 long to find it with the voucher but they are down to
23 one person right now and that's not enough. It's
24 creating a huge bottleneck and that just incentivizes
25 people from reporting discrimination which allows

2 landlords and brokers to continue to break the law.
3 So, additionally CityFHEPs is a huge help. We're
4 super excited about all the wins last year but again
5 I echo that the administrative delays and burdens are
6 huge barriers for people. The lack of staffing is
7 slowing down the processing. The cumbersome
8 documentation requirements. I mean I have a member
9 who got accepted into a really incredible apartment
10 in November and she is still waiting to move in
11 because of delays. I mean it's, it's unacceptable.
12 So I will continue to spell out the details of that
13 in my written testimony and I look forward to
14 continuing conversation with you about these
15 important issues. Thank you.

16 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
17 you. Thank you Amy for your testimony. I'm now
18 going to move to Sarah Wilson, over to Sarah.

19 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

20 SARAH WILSON: Hi everyone. Thank you
21 so much for having me. My name is Sarah Wilson. I'm
22 here today with Neighbors Together someone I've done
23 a lot of work with on housing and homelessness
24 issues. What I have already head mentioned the
25 CityFHEPs is something that we work on together.

2 Both the dollar amount as well as getting the income
3 curve taken off. I've also done work with Urban
4 Justice and Vocal New York as well as on the HRA Info
5 line which I keep hearing come up as well. Like I
6 said, Amy said a lot has already been discussed so I
7 am going to try as well to see things that maybe have
8 not. I am formerly homeless, was in multiple
9 shelters, I'm on disability, fixed income, needed a
10 fixed rent. When there is foreseeable of risk of
11 loss of general welfare community has an obligation
12 to intercede. A major part of why the homelessness
13 is so big despite stereotypes is because of illegal
14 wrongful evictions, one of the documents of shelter
15 requests is an eviction letter. Most of the people
16 have that but they've never had Counsel nor good
17 cause which is leading to a responsible for a major
18 factor that's creating homelessness and the
19 homelessness crisis itself which then creates a lot
20 of secondary characteristics and it carries like I
21 said a great risk for loss of life. Once you're in
22 the system it is nearly impossible to get out of and
23 that's, sorry, give me one more second. Okay, it's
24 understood that preventing homelessness by serving
25 people who are at risk is both more effective and

2 humane than what's been going on for the past decade
3 and contributing like I said to a major part off the
4 homelessness crisis. People assume that there was
5 something wrong before they went in but a lot of the
6 time it's not a condition of being in the street and
7 in the shelters for so long and the current practice
8 and treatments is what's causing the health
9 conditions and the breakdown. Without shelter, food
10 to eat, community privacy, safe conditions, you have
11 physical, mental, emotional, spiritual will become
12 broken that can be prevented by extending the
13 eviction moratorium, allow people the opportunity to
14 obtain counsel as well as rental assistance that may
15 be needed or whatever else is needed to . . .

16 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

17 SARAH WILSON: . . . stop creating this
18 homelessness crisis. I got just one more second and
19 I'll be done with y'all. Sorry, sorry, sorry, okay,
20 you know what instead of describing the people as a
21 cancer let's start treating them as the humans that
22 they need to be and I'll leave it at that. Thank
23 y'all and God Bless.

24 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
25 you Sarah for your testimony. I move now to Beatrice

2 Simpkins followed by Andy Aujla. Over to Beatrice
3 Simpkins.

4 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

5 BEATRICE SIMPKINS: My name is Beatrice
6 Simpkins I'm the Chief Program Officer for the
7 Partnership for the Homeless which focuses on
8 preventing homelessness via housing rental
9 assistance, health education and changing the public
10 narrative. I would like to thank Chair Ayala and
11 committee members for the opportunity to speak about
12 the impact of the expiration of state and federal
13 eviction moratoria. With the moratoria over and
14 without sufficient emergency rental assistance
15 program funds, our City and State will experience a
16 tsunami of homelessness that will last for decades.
17 This is a moment to focus on prevention. The most
18 cost effective humanitarian solution. This requires
19 safeguarding people in existing homes, via rental
20 assistance and other measures and safe guarding the
21 states stock of reportable homes through investments.
22 It is estimated that 400,000 households in the city
23 will need rental assistance that two and three of
24 them that applied for ERAP have not been assisted.
25 While many families who lost income during COVID

2 regained work and income these, those earning minimum
3 wage and low incomes have no means to cover the rent
4 gap without assistance. Lifting the moratorium
5 without adequate assistance hurts tenants and
6 property owners, particularly smaller property
7 owners. Not providing rental assistance equates for
8 the allowing of thousands to lose their homes and end
9 up in shelters and that annuals 68,000 cost per
10 family is vastly more expensive than the average
11 \$4000 that a household needs to address rent arrears.
12 New York Homelessness is primarily a story about
13 women and children of color bearing the devastating
14 impact of domestic violence, evictions and
15 overcrowding in housing. This sadly is a racial
16 injustice story. Over 95% of people in shelters are
17 people of color and over 90% of families in shelters
18 are female headed. At the partnership 85% of our
19 clients are black and Latin women and women with
20 children. When government is willing to pay more to
21 allow families to lose their homes and experience
22 homelessness and doing best in measures that prevent
23 homelessness we must ask why. Instead we must
24 together, we must work together to end homelessness
25 and the first step in investing and prevention. The

2 partnership is ready to be your partner in this.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you.

5 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank

6 you so much for your testimony. I'm going to call

7 now on Andy Aujla to testify.

8 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

9 ANDY AUJLA: Thank you everyone. My name

10 is Andy Aujla I am the Director of Advocacy with

11 Communities Resist. A community based legal services

12 and organizing nonprofit serving tenants throughout

13 Brooklyn and Queens. Thank you for the opportunity

14 to testify today and we echo the sentiments of many

15 other legal services providers who have already

16 testified and this will be a summary of our testimony

17 which is also being submitted in writing.

18 Communities Resist work and model legal advocacy is

19 centered on representing tenant associations an

20 affirmative cases for improved living conditions and

21 to combat tenant harassment and discrimination. We

22 were founded on the understanding that housing

23 justice is a racial justice issue and that tenant

24 legal services must be in support of community based

25 tenant organizing. Although Communities Resist is

2 not directly providing representation through the
3 Right to Counsel program we continue to provide
4 services through for tenants through the City's Anti-
5 Harrassment tenant protection program which supports
6 building wide legal action by tenants against their
7 landlords for repairs and to fight back again
8 harassment and discrimination. The pandemic has
9 exacerbated an already existing housing crisis by
10 compounding the scarcity of affordable housing in our
11 most diverse neighborhoods with an economic and
12 healthcare crisis. Our organization has been
13 assisting tenants throughout the pandemic by filing
14 legal action against landlords using illegal means to
15 displace tenants providing brief advice, hosting
16 dozens of Know You Rights workshops and connecting
17 tenants with essential services to meet their basic
18 needs like heat and how water. Also a member of a
19 coalition of organizations that has helped hundreds
20 of tenants apply for and receive state ERAP funding.
21 Over the last two years we've seen a start rise in
22 illegal lock out cases and instances of landlords
23 shutting off essential services the aforementioned
24 heat and hot water and also not making repairs or
25 eradicating vermin. There has also been a steady

2 rise in cases of harassment and discrimination and
3 discussed previously. We know that evictions and
4 displacement have a disproportionate impact on people
5 of color, especially women and children and that
6 housing instability has a significant adverse effect
7 on an individual's education, employment, family
8 relationships and physical and mental health. It's
9 now . . .

10 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired

11 ANDY AUJLA: . . . there more than ever
12 that legal representation is essential to level the
13 playing field between landlords of means and our low
14 income neighbors. This is why we are employing the
15 City Council to increase the funding that's available
16 to all of these legal service organization to fully
17 fund Local Law 53 and also to fully fund the one shot
18 deals. Thank you.

19 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
20 you Andy for your testimony. Before calling up our
21 last panelist in this list of speakers, I also want
22 to note the following panel so everyone can be ready
23 once you are called. The following panel is going to
24 be in the following order of speaking, Emily Ponder
25 Williams, Oksana Mironova, Imran Hossain, Rafael

2 Moure-Punnett and Stephanie Espinal so that's going
3 to be our following panel. And now, finally for this
4 panel, calling on Jesenia Ponce.

5 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

6 JESENIA PONCE: Hi. Good afternoon. I
7 thank you for the opportunity to be able to present
8 our testimony. My name is Jesenia Ponce I'm a
9 supervising attorney at Northern Manhattan
10 Improvement Corporation. We provide legal services
11 for low income tenants in upper Manhattan and the
12 Bronx. Due to time limitations I'll jump right to
13 the point. Over 200,000 pre-pandemic eviction cases
14 continue to move forward in Housing Court as we
15 speak. As you know from previous testimony
16 expiration of the moratorium has brought a dramatic
17 increase in seeking rental assistance. Tenants
18 continue to struggle with unemployment and
19 consequently be unable to pay their arrears. But
20 with tenants unable to apply for a one deal unless
21 they have future ability and ERAP funds no longer
22 realistically available and rent programs, rent
23 voucher programs being underfunded and maintaining
24 limited eligibility the tenants find themselves at a
25 dead end because they will never be able to pay the

2 accumulated arrears. With evictions now in place
3 without having a solution for tenants struggling with
4 arrears there is limited bureaucratic work around
5 this issue because there is simply not enough funding
6 for rental assistance. Also the impact that the
7 expiration of the moratorium has had and will
8 continue to have on legal services is disasterous.
9 Advocates lack proper support to manage the wave of
10 impending evictions. The tsunami as someone
11 previously testified. That's a perfect way to put
12 it. Providers are working at higher than normal
13 caseloads without additional funding and support
14 staff. We must remember that housing attorneys
15 maintained a full caseload before the pandemic and
16 the additional wave of eviction proceedings will
17 influence services provided as well as debilitating
18 our staff. This additional strain on our work place
19 poses a risk of high turnover as staff find
20 themselves overwhelmed and, and, and it's nearly
21 impossible to navigate this wave of cases
22 efficiently. Without fund funding for legal counsel
23 and support staff, legal services are ill-equipped to
24 handle the growing housing crisis in our city. All
25 tenants should have, all tenants should have the

2 opportunity to be represented by an attorney who will
3 be able to provide meaningful representation on each
4 and every case. Thank you and I welcome your
5 questions.

6 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
7 you Jesenia for your testimony and I apologize for
8 mispronouncing your name earlier. Now, going to turn
9 to our next panel. Our next panel will be Emily
10 Ponder-Williams followed by Oksana Mironova, followed
11 by Imran Hossain, followed by Rafael Moure-Pennett
12 followed by Stephanie Espinal. Over now to Emily
13 Ponder-Williams.

14 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

15 EMILY PONDER-WILLIAMS: Hello. Thank
16 you so much for, to the committee and to our Chair
17 for hearing these important issues today. My name is
18 Emily Ponder-Williams. I am the managing attorney of
19 the Civil Defense Practice, a neighborhood defender
20 service of Harlem. And DSS as a holistic public
21 defense officer that participates in the Right to
22 Council Program and has been providing some of the
23 legal services to the residence of Northern Manhattan
24 for the last 30 years. I want to jump in and
25 specifically address some of the issues that are

2 facing legal services providers at this time. I know
3 the committee has heard a lot today about the
4 challenges but I'd like to get a little more specific
5 about what those challenges are and I'll also point
6 the committee to my written testimony which provides
7 even further detail on these challenges. The
8 committee has heard a lot today I think about new
9 eviction filings and an impending wave and we've
10 heard that the new filings have not quite reached
11 pre-pandemic levels but what I want to stress is that
12 the influx of cases coming to legal services
13 providers is not just about new filings. We are
14 being assigned to cases that pre-date the pandemic
15 sometimes by a number of years. We were recently
16 assigned a case that is on appeal and has been
17 pending since 2016. This is because the full Right
18 to Counsel as we all know was not in effect pre-
19 pandemic but these causes paused and they are now
20 returning we are being assigned both new filings as
21 well as cases that have ongoing again for a number of
22 years and pre-pandemic. As a result, in Manhattan we
23 are fielding on any given intake day four different
24 parts and might take on roughly 30 or more new cases,
25 new to us cases on that particular day. This is

2 spreading our staff incredibly thin. On top of this
3 we are not only being assigned cases in court but we
4 are fielding referrals constantly through Housing
5 Court Answers, the court and OCJ asking us to contact
6 tenants before court and these are, this is truly
7 hampering our abilities to provide holistic services
8 that is required to implement and real meaningful
9 right to counsel. So, thank you again to the
10 Committee and to everyone else who is testifying
11 today.

12 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
13 you Emily for your testimony. Now going to move to
14 Oksana Mironova.

15 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

16 OKSANA MIRONOVA: Good afternoon and
17 thank you. My name is Oksana Minova and I am a
18 Housing Policy Analyst at the Community Service
19 Society of New York. We have been closely tracking
20 eviction rates in New York City for decades. We know
21 more than one in four loan tenants are behind on
22 their rent during the pandemic with black and Latin-X
23 tenant and particularly women at greatest risk. We
24 have a bunch of additional data on evictions that's
25 imported in my written testimony as well on your

2 website in the reports. Below are five
3 recommendations for easing the City's looming
4 eviction crisis. Right to Counsel. Following the
5 implementation of Right to Counsel we have worked
6 closely with the Right to Counsel Coalition to
7 advocate for local law 53. The law needs to be
8 implemented immediately for all the reasons that the
9 previous panelists have talked about already today.
10 The eviction case backlog. We know that New York
11 City Housing Courts are struggling with a backlog of
12 eviction filings and in the coming months Housing
13 Courts should only move the cases for tenants with
14 legal representation specifically and adjourn all
15 others until legal services organizations have more
16 capacity. Rental Assistance. CityFHEPs is the
17 rental assistance program that the City has the most
18 direct control over. Unfortunately, there is an
19 administrator that enforcement of [inaudible]
20 eviction prevention specifically. Most crucially New
21 Yorkers must stay in shelter for 90 days before
22 becoming eligible are faced with systemic source of
23 income discrimination from landlords and undocumented
24 New Yorkers are excluded. For the New Yorkers who do
25 get access to access to the vouchers, often get lower

2 quality housing with a lot of HPD violations. The
3 city should work to expand eligibility to effective
4 prevent intervention and ramp up enforcement of
5 housing code and source of income discrimination.
6 Abolishing and replacing the tax lien sales. Today
7 the authorization for the City's Tax Lien Sales this
8 policy often leads to displacements and eviction for
9 renters living in buildings facing Tax Foreclosure.
10 The City must end this program and replace it with a
11 system that stabilizes these buildings by turning
12 them in to social housing.

13 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

14 OKSANA MIRONOVA: And finally the
15 Community Opportunity to Purchase Act. This is a
16 bill that was introduced by Council Member Rivera in
17 the last session that would give non-profit and
18 community land trusts the right of first refusal to
19 buildings going up for sale and we urge the City
20 Council to pass this law when it's reintroduced.
21 Thank you so much.

22 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
23 you Oksana for that testimony. I'm going to call now
24 Imran Hossain. Over to Imran.

25 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

2 IMRAN HOSSAIN: Good afternoon and thank
3 you Chair Ayala. My name is Imran Hossain and I'm a
4 staff attorney with the Volunteers of Legal Service,
5 the Civil Services Organization serving all five
6 boroughs while working to marginalize small
7 businesses. The COVID 19 pandemic has highlighted
8 and extenuated many of the systemic injustices within
9 New York City. However, unlike the disease itself
10 where it developed an effective medicinal solution we
11 have not yet found a fix for the havoc this pandemic
12 has brought upon our marginalized small business
13 office for the overlook back on this incredible city.
14 The moratorium made one thing apparent, legislation
15 that requires landlords and commercial tenants work
16 together to yield to mutual success. Recently I was
17 working with an immigrant woman, small business owner
18 who operated a barber shop for over 20 years. Given
19 the past two years in which overly sees operations
20 for a substantial period of time, she was unable to
21 pay rent and face the prospect of losing her business
22 to eviction. In the absence of a moratorium, the
23 landlord likely pursued an extensive, time consuming
24 legal proceeding only to receive an empty store front
25 while a tenant would have lost her business, a local

2 pillar of the community. Instead the landlord,
3 tenant worked together and found a mutually
4 beneficial solution. I'm happy to say that the
5 landlord is receiving regular rent payments while the
6 small business owner can maintain her livelihood. In
7 addition to legislation and/or potential funding to
8 provide much needed relief to commercial tenants, we
9 must focus in on showing our small business owners
10 are able to take advantage of these breaks. Many of
11 our small business owners are immigrants who do not
12 speak English as their first language or know their
13 rights under the law. This is all exacerbated by the
14 fact that these tenants, unlike residential tenants
15 do not have the right to counsel and correct eviction
16 proceedings regarding themselves at their businesses.
17 This resulted in missed opportunities and makes it
18 harder for landlords and tenant to come to an
19 agreement. While the city considers programs,
20 fundings and policies for residential tenants who
21 face eviction, we must not forget the commercial
22 tenants who are also struggling to make rent.

23 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

24 IMRAN HOSSAN: When a small business
25 fails, not only does a family lose its livelihood,

2 the workers lose their jobs and the community loses
3 an important service and for that, New York City is
4 worse off. Thank you.

5 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
6 you so much Imran for your testimony. Now going to
7 move to Rafael Moure-Punnett for testimony. Over to
8 Rafael.

9 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is set.

10 RAFAEL MOURE-PUNNETT: Thank you. Good
11 afternoon Council Member Ayala and other members of
12 the committee. I want to thank you for allowing me
13 to testify. My name is Rafael Moure-Punnett. I'm
14 the Associate Director for Housing at the Harlem
15 Community Justice Center. We are a project for the
16 center for court innovation which is an agency that
17 has 25 years working in New York City to create a
18 more humane justice system and the Harlem Community
19 Justice Center has been operating for 20 years
20 showing residents in central Harlem including
21 constituents in your District, Council Member Ayala.
22 We want to thank the Council for allowing us be in
23 partnership and speaking to them about our concerns
24 around the eviction moratorium ending. You know, it
25 seems like now that there aren't legal protections

2 the increase in volume of court cases is a risk for
3 our clients and your constituents and the service
4 provides has addressed. But I want to speak a bit
5 about public housing tenants because before the
6 pandemic NYCHA was the largest evictor in New York
7 City and we are very much concerned about our clients
8 in public housing who have ballooning debts. Many of
9 these clients were encouraged by NYCHA to apply for
10 ERAP and now have not received any ERAP funding and
11 now area ineligible for one shot deals because they
12 have pending ERAP applications. We are concerned
13 that this is a very large number of tenants in the
14 city and that they have no options for rental relief
15 and their rent arrears are going to continue to
16 increase until NYCHA brings them to court. We are
17 advocating for these residents at the Justice Center
18 and definitely want to highlight the residents, the
19 new protections available due to the Fields Re-Rust
20 Settlement that NYCHA entered in to which is going to
21 provide tenants hopefully the additional protections
22 encountering rent over charges. While the state
23 assumes that rent subsidies will pull into arrears,
24 you know the subject of this litigation was that
25 NYCHA is not doing, not adjusting rents and we are

2 hoping that the Fields Re-Rest Settlement and
3 educating tenants about this settlement can really
4 dramatically increase tenants ability to fight
5 overcharges due to grievance process. I am . . .

6 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

7 RAFAEL MOURE-PUNNETT: . . . Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Rafael, let me
9 ask you a question. The Administrator Fitzpatrick
10 and I, I asked her about the, I lost my track of
11 thought, the evictions and I didn't ask about the
12 public housing. I lost my question, I'll come back
13 to me could you just mentioned something and it just
14 like, it struck a cord with . . . oh, the ERAP
15 applications. The ERAP applications, so the person
16 applied for ERAP my understanding is based on what we
17 are seeing in our office is that they can't apply for
18 a one shot deal because they have a pending ca-, so
19 Administrator Fitzpatrick mentioned that that had
20 changed. Is that, so that, so that's not applying to
21 people that had applied previous to the change?

22 RAFAEL MOURE-PUNNETT: It's my
23 understanding that if you apply for ERAP this year,
24 you can still apply for a one shot deal but if you
25 applied for ERAP last year, it's going to appear as

2 pending in the system and you are no longer eligible
3 for a one shot deal. NYCHA sent out letters and
4 emails to all the residents saying go apply for ERAP
5 so if residents did what NYCHA told them to do they
6 are not ineligible for a one shot deal and this is a
7 problem that has, you know, no immediate solution and
8 NYCHA has to figure out what to do with all these
9 tenants who owe tens of thousands of dollars.

10 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Gee. Thank
11 you. Thank you.

12 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
13 you Rafael for your testimony. Going to move now to
14 the final panelist in this segment, Stephanie
15 Espinal. Over to Stephanie.

16 SGT. MARTINEZ: Clock is ready.

17 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I
18 believe Stephanie needs to be unmuted. At this time
19 I think that Stephanie might be experiencing some
20 technical difficulties because Stephanie no longer on
21 the Zoom. So, in the meanwhile I will call up our
22 next panel and we will circle back with Stephanie.
23 The next panel will be in the following order, Ann
24 Korchak, Joan Zhu, Helen and Hung Bouma.

25 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

2 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: So, I
3 am now going to turn to Ann Korchak for her
4 testimony.

5 ANN KORCHAK: Hi. Good afternoon, my
6 name is Ann Korchak and I'm currently serving as the
7 President of SPONY, which is the Small Property
8 Owners of New York. I'm grateful for the opportunity
9 to speak today. Our members have been greatly
10 impacted by the eviction moratorium. And I just want
11 to share a few examples with the ending of the
12 eviction moratorium, what some of our members might
13 see. In Brooklyn, a homeowner in an affordable
14 building who has had a drug dealing squatter in her
15 home since before the pandemic may get a chance to
16 return safety to the other residents in her building
17 but first a judge must view the videotapes and hear
18 the testimony of the other residents in the building.
19 In Queens, a young woman who has daily encounters
20 with a threatening and misogynistic non-paying tenant
21 may get a judge to understand the danger that she's
22 living in. In Manhattan an owner who has a drifter
23 in her apartment and is losing every legal protection
24 afforded to tenants that allows her to continue to
25 occupy a bedroom in this woman's apartment, perhaps

2 the woman can be removed and she can begin healing
3 from this incredibly emotionally damaging ordeal. In
4 Staten Island there is a homeowner with a tenant who
5 has not lost his livelihood and was not impacted by
6 COVID. Perhaps this owner can seek back rent and get
7 the home back. In the Bronx, perhaps a judge can
8 finally hear a case that pre-dates the pandemic where
9 a tenant has willfully destroyed the property and
10 made the building uninhabitable for the other family
11 below. The eviction moratorium began with the best
12 of intentions, to keep people housed and out of
13 shelter so as to slow the spread of COVID but this
14 public health measure has been seized as an
15 opportunity to force small owners to act as shelter
16 providers without compensation all the while the city
17 and the state dole out millions to wasteful and
18 sometimes criminal third party providers who are
19 running the broken shelter system in our City. It is
20 time to acknowledge that the eviction moratorium has
21 hurt small landlords.

22 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

23 ANN KORCHAK: And that the blanket
24 eviction moratorium that protected all tenants and
25 left no room to deal with situations like the ones

2 I've just described has created a crisis for the
3 small operators. We are the backbone of New York
4 City Housing and destroying us greatly impacts the
5 renters in our buildings and I'd just like to add
6 quickly, I know earlier, you know, there was a lot of
7 people speaking about the right to Counsel
8 legislation and you know we support that. You know,
9 we do believe that people that are in need, you know
10 finally should get representation but we also believe
11 that that protection either should be provided to
12 struggling small housing providers too. You know,
13 they fit the same income parameters that you will be
14 offering the right to Counsel for tenants, you know,
15 the, the small owners who fit that same financial
16 profile, you know, should be given the Right to
17 Counsel as well. And also, one of the earlier
18 speakers, I believe it was Eric Lee, you know, called
19 for the entire \$2 billion in pandemic aid to go to
20 rental assistance and you know, we agree with that
21 also 100%. So thank you for allowing me to testify
22 today. I appreciate it.

23 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
24 you Ann for your testimony. I'm going to now move to
25

2 Joan Zhu for testimony followed by Helen. Over to
3 Joan Zhu.

4 JOAN ZHU: Hi. Thank you for the
5 opportunity to testify in front of the Chair Ayala
6 and all the City Council Members. I'm just a small
7 landlord in a building. My case actually has been
8 over two years of not going anywhere. I filed two
9 court cases. One is the Housing Court. One in the
10 Supreme Court. My tenant actually has the ability to
11 pay. He has a two factories in the City. He makes
12 about \$4.5 million sales every year and before he
13 applied. When he file the application to apply to an
14 open apartment, he actually told me that has only, he
15 makes over \$270,000 a year. So, a person that makes
16 almost \$300,000 a year but now paying me a dime for
17 two years. And it also was mentioned just two blocks
18 away from a property but he's not moving back. He
19 told me to just like put my mortgage into
20 forbearance, asked me to defer my tax and he said
21 that he was just staying here. I'm not going
22 anywhere. With this pandemic there is nothing that
23 you can do so he owes me like so far for 22 months
24 rent which is \$55,000. My case actually was reported
25 by NY1 News on 10 p.m. live on February 17. I

2 actually I'm going to include a link on my testimony
3 and you are welcome to watch it and just one of the
4 things that people just using the system. The person
5 at ERAP they are basing all the eviction moratorium,
6 they are just us, not paying a small landlord and we
7 are actually in the danger of losing our other house.
8 As a small landlord, we need help. We want our voice
9 be heard of what has happened to us. So I'm just
10 telling you that. You are welcome to ask me any
11 questions, that's all. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I appreciate
13 you coming to testify and I, I actually did the New
14 York 1 report and I'm sorry that this is happening to
15 you and I, you know, I would imagine that throughout
16 the pandemic there are situations where people may be
17 taking advantage of the system but I really want to
18 reiterate that the reason that we're having this
19 hearing is because the majority of people don't,
20 right. And then they, they really are in need and we
21 need to be able to make that distinction and to keep
22 that, you know, and make sure that we are protecting,
23 you know both those residents that really need to be
24 protected, but also not at the expense of smaller
25 landlords, so there has to be a better balance. We

2 need, we need to do better to protect, you know, both
3 sides. But I wanted to thank you personally for
4 coming in today to testify and I'm sorry again that
5 this is happening to you. Submit your information
6 and we will look at it and we'll see how we can be
7 helpful.

8 JOAN ZHU: Okay. Thank you.

9 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
10 you very much Joan for your testimony. Before
11 calling on the next panelist I want to give a heads
12 up of the names of those who will be on the following
13 panel. So, the following panel is going to be
14 comprised in this order of speaking, Shuzhen Zhuo,
15 Zelle Fin Chen, and I apologize if I'm mispronouncing
16 your names and Towaki Komatsu. So I'll now go back
17 to calling the names of the remaining panelists in
18 this panel, over to Helen for testimony.

19 SGT. MARTINEZ: Clock is ready.

20 HELEN: My name is Helen. I'm a small
21 landlord from Queens. I'm still suffering from
22 financial, mental and emotional distress after
23 eviction moratorium has expired. My eviction cases
24 got in court because of a need to wait for the ERAP
25 decision. We need to wait for the tenants ERAP

2 decision. We are unable to take back the upstairs
3 apartment to allow our children to get more spaces.
4 Plus bad tenants, they have destroyed my apartment.
5 They are destructive. Their behavior has breached
6 the quiet enjoyment of my home and in fact according
7 to my life that is why I do not participate in ERAP.
8 My tenant applied for ERAP. They gave fought, you
9 know landlord, which I don't . . . I can't access to
10 it. They do not give landlord contact number. They
11 don't give my address. Actually I'm living in the
12 same house with them but on the first floor. They're
13 on the second floor. They did this on purpose in
14 order to prolong their long stay in my property free
15 of rent. I told my lawyer, I'm having financial
16 hardship with two college kids. I don't want the
17 ERAP money but I would rather to evict the
18 destructive noisy tenant as soon as possible. I'm on
19 disability. I have cancer. I have severe medical
20 problem. I'm having psychology program plus they're
21 a destructive noisy tenant. They have destroyed my
22 property. They use force to break the apartment
23 doors and windows on and off. They drilled holes in
24 the bathtub sewage purpose cause flooding on the
25 first floor apartment. There is dog urine everywhere

2 on the carpet in the apartment. The dog urinate
3 smell seeps down to my first floor apartment from
4 time to time. It is stinky and very disgusting.
5 They sought this dog without my permission. They
6 constantly have stranger moving in and out of the
7 apartment. They addict to marijuana. Husband is
8 alcoholic. They are always fighting, hitting walls,
9 pounding floor, smashing and crashing on the floor.
10 They keep screaming, yelling, crying, loud talking.
11 They have engaged in physical fighting and police
12 were called in many times. My tenant continues to
13 damage my property on purpose. They continue
14 stumbling, jumping on the floor, making excessive
15 noise every day to harassment. I'm on medication.

16 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

17 HELEN: My medical condition requires me
18 to sleep a lot. I can't sleep at night because of
19 the destructive tenants makes my medical condition
20 getting worse in just two years. My tenant has
21 abused the ERAP system. As a property owner and a
22 regular primary voter, I have a right to tell the
23 lawmakers we need laws to protect the owner not just
24 tenant, not just a certain population. Not just only
25 my property next to, but also my house and my life is

2 getting screwed because I can't trust my neighbors
3 anymore. As a small owner, I have a same human
4 rights as all the tenants in New York. We all want
5 to live in a safe, peaceful and quiet enjoyment home.
6 I need to take back my property as soon as possible
7 for my health and my life. Thank you for the
8 opportunity to testify. Thank you.

9 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
10 you Helen for your testimony. I will now turn to
11 Hongbao Ma for testimony.

12 SGT. MARTINEZ: Clock is ready.

13 HOUNGBAO MA: Hi. My name is Houngbao
14 Ma. I live in Queens. I have a tenant about three
15 years now, before the pandemic, also damaged, flooded
16 my basement. I check how to . . . every year. I
17 can't do anything even before pandemic. I heard
18 landlord . . . but my question, besides my problem.
19 My question, I have several, several questions. 1)
20 I'm single. Before somebody return, the tenants.
21 But I think this is a legal problem. Money problem.
22 Money problem. Because the owner needed to pay a
23 property tax, lose the property because school,
24 policeman. The owner must pay public service to the
25 City and the electricity and the water and a lot of

2 thing. Who pays this? Who pays this? Your own
3 money. Why do New York City, when is the landlord
4 who have to pay for other people. This is more of a
5 problem. Global. No facility exists. This is why
6 some people pay other people's electricity, water, my
7 water bill sometimes is . . .

8 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

9 HOUNGBAO MA: . . . sometimes \$500 per
10 month. Pay the bill. My problem. Why I must pay.
11 Yes I need to pay the bill but this is not
12 reasonable. Second to one this prompted 100 percent
13 on the property. Our homes are, our mail, our kinds
14 of people are committed, everybody the whole New York
15 of people who think about this. This is a problem.
16 The country, your whole country, the global history,
17 all the family is affected. This is very good if
18 somebody pay rent.

19 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

20 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr.
21 Ma I'm sorry.

22 HOUNGBAO MA: Consider this. Like a
23 restaurant. There are certain ones, there are
24 certain ones is . . .

2 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr.
3 Ma?

4 HOUNGBAO MA: There is damage to America
5 because there is not a fix. So part of this
6 [inaudible], the facility, the landlord, the people
7 [inaudible].

8 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr.
9 Ma, we . . .

10 HOUNGBAO MA: [recording issue]

11 SGT. MARTINEZ: Sir, your time is
12 expired. Can you stop?

13 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
14 you.

15 HOUNGBAO MA: We have to reach, we have
16 to, our country is strong. Everybody has work, paid
17 for her or her, cost of living. Thank you very much.

18 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
19 you.

20 HOUNGBAO MA: Thank you. America, our
21 country is strong, reach. We all agree we are number
22 one, whole global, number one city.

23 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
24 you.

2 HOUNGBAO MA: Why so many people come out
3 to buy the home. This is a problem. The country,
4 the, our President, our government, our Mayor to make
5 our New York City [recording issue] everybody reach.

6 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr.
7 Ma, we have to move on, I'm sorry. Thank you. Thank
8 you for your testimony. Thank you.

9 HOUNGBAO MA: I love America. Now there
10 is somebody there not move out.

11 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time is expired. Thank
12 you.

13 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
14 you. Thank you so much for your testimony Mr. Ma.
15 We're now going to move to our following panel. I'm
16 going to call up the next two panels so that
17 everybody has a heads up as to when they will be
18 going. So, the next panel will be comprised of
19 Shuzhen Zhuo, followed by Towaki Komatsu, followed by
20 Dianna Pershad followed by Katrina Corbell and then
21 that panel will be followed by Tamara Holliday, Sarah
22 Block and Kristie Ortiz. So I will now begin with
23 our next panel, beginning with Shuzhen Zhuo. And I
24 apologize if I'm mispronouncing your name. Over to
25 Shuzhen.

2 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

3 SHUZHEN ZHUO: Hello. I am Shuzhen Zhuo.

4 I live in Queens. My whole family has been here
5 since the pandemic. Just because I leave my, our
6 lives are now safe before or even after the
7 expiration of the moratorium. Before the pandemic,
8 my tenant are normal people. They were, normally
9 they are nice but since there are so many special
10 rules come out they met the laws. I mean I don't
11 know why they just make the tenants multiple people.
12 I have, there are five kids in my family. The
13 youngest is not even two years old and now it's my
14 tenant play loud music in the early morning before 10
15 p.m. Not only do they play loud music after 10:00
16 p.m. the time my kids are all sleeping. I call in
17 to, not at 10:00 p.m. I call at midnight but they
18 don't listen to me, the kid plays loud music until
19 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. in early morning. I call 3-1-1 and
20 no one come to help me to stop it. I'm so sad. My
21 kids cannot even have a peaceful night's sleep and
22 there is something [recording problem] in the
23 daytime, not at night, in the daytime. If my kids
24 are out in the backyard at the time and sometimes
25 late, if you think you can't stop your kids, go to

2 the big yard. They even through their large trash
3 back from the balcony to the front yard. Sure,
4 there's no one would come out and be hit by their
5 trash bag. Sometimes he throws bottles to the street
6 and so like our lives are all up and no one can help.

7 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time is expired.

8 SHUZHEN ZHUO: I want my. I try to help
9 my case. If someone can help me to protect my kids.
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Thank you.

12 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
13 you Shuzhen for your testimony. Now going to move to
14 Towaki Komatsu for testimony. Over to Towaki.

15 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

16 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Hi. A question for you.
17 If you sign on for a lease agreement and it's
18 subsidized by HRA if HRA then illegally changes your
19 apartment lease agreement after you sign it isn't
20 that forgery? Isn't that fraud? Guess what HRA did
21 exactly that in 2016 after I signed an apartment
22 lease agreement on February 16 and Ms. Ayala you know
23 for sure that I've repeatedly testified in public
24 hearings you also know that I've done so absolutely
25 no avail. We were in a hearing back in 2019 with

2 Ritchie Torres, where Mr. Torres illegally kicked me
3 out of it. Like I said in this hearing like I got
4 last week for OTJ is essentially condoning the fact
5 that HRA committed that fraud. So the question is
6 that today's hearing is about oversight, it's about
7 back to the eviction moratorium. Well HRA is
8 providing the funding for the legal services
9 providers so if I contact legal aid and all of these
10 other partners of HRA and ask them to have a subpoena
11 issued against HRA to give me the records, guess what
12 they won't cooperate. So, my question is, your
13 Chairman of this committee not Steven Levine, that
14 useless piece of something. The question is, what
15 are you going to do about it? I mean are we going to
16 have a fresh new start here. The question, what are
17 you going to do about it? Also to point out I have a
18 federal lawsuit against Steven Banks the case is
19 Komatsu versus City of New York case number 21-CV-
20 1115. I filed an illegal filing on Friday about
21 that, to the Chief District Judge in New York City.
22 So again, new Chairwoman of this City, New York City
23 Charter Section 1116 applies to you and the other
24 thing too, Urban Pathways, it's the slumlord of the
25 building which I reside. I tried testifying in a

2 public hearing last week about a new control for \$15
3 million. Urban Pathways and HRA jointly worked
4 together to subject me to that fraud and forgery. So
5 the question is, why is Urban Pathways getting more
6 money from people like you who fund these contracts
7 when Urban Pathways together with HRA committed fraud
8 and forgery. I should also point out that Fredrick
9 Shack is the CEO of Urban Pathways. He is also on
10 the Advisory Committee for Mayor Adams, so don't you
11 think there is a bit of a conflict of interest there?
12 And do you want to keep your cash or do you want to
13 continue to have it be wasted to slumlords like Urban
14 Pathways? Do you have an answer for me?

15 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: My answer is
16 that I will not discuss active litigation cases at a
17 hearing. You are more than welcome to reach out to
18 my office and we can have an offline conversation.

19 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Oh and last question is
20 this. There was another publishing hearing recently
21 where people had Exhibits in conjunction with their
22 testimony for the outdoor dining public hearing about
23 two or three weeks ago why is it that when they tried
24 to present is that it's in conjunction with their

2 testimony that's relevant, why is it that they cannot
3 present Exhibits within their testimony?

4 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I'm not, I'm not
5 sure.

6 TOWAKI KOMATSU: I'm talking about First
7 Amendment info and rights?

8 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I'm not sure
9 Mr. Towaki. If you have . . .

10 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time is up. Time is up.

11 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: . . . with
12 that, your time is up. We need to move forward,
13 thank you.

14 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
15 you Towaki for your testimony. We are going to move
16 to the following two panelists for this panel, Dianna
17 Pershad followed by Katrina Corbell. Over to Dianna
18 Pershad.

19 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

20 DIANNA PERSHAD: Good afternoon. My name
21 is Dianna Pershad, thank you for allowing me this
22 opportunity to direct the committee for today's
23 hearing to provide my perspective on the impact of
24 the moratorium. Today marked the final day of black
25 history month and yet I will be discussing how

1 systemic racism in our agency like DSS and HPD has
2 adversely affected my wife and I as black LGBTQ
3 homeowners and taxpayers. While I understand the
4 intent of the moratorium was to safeguard New Yorkers
5 who were experiencing financial hardship with the
6 COVID 19. In my case, the moratorium protectors were
7 abused by New York City Agencies particularly DSS and
8 HPD to enact an agenda of retaliation and
9 discrimination against my household. My wife and I
10 belong to the community of first time homeowners who
11 by way of our contract or obligation to maintain our
12 homes as primary residences. On March 15, 2022 DSS
13 illegally placed a clientele in the empty home
14 attached to mine and has been paying that homeowner a
15 CityFEPs voucher to break her contract. Our homes
16 are precluded from being rented and those DSS clients
17 are not supposed to be on site renters. Every
18 homeowner in my development is required to remain in
19 our homes until 2032. Because of this moratorium,
20 DSS has refused to remove it's illegally placed
21 clients from the home attached to mine. On December
22 2, 2021, my ongoing nightmare with these New York
23 City Agencies as well as your clients were published
24 in the City online newspaper. I will be attaching
25

1 this article as an addendum to my testimony. From
2 March 15, 2020 to present my wife and I have been
3 dealing with numerous issues from this illegally
4 placed DSS client family. It's a home precluded for
5 raising. We have been and continue to be threatened
6 with physical and bodily harm. These threats were
7 even verbalized to the NYPD. They have damaged our
8 property. They have made threats to damage our
9 vehicle and this was realized in Manusha on January
10 1, 2021. We have been consistently and based on our
11 sexuality and continue to experience homophobic slurs
12 by parents and children alike. Our quality of life
13 has been adversely affected to the home that was only
14 supposed to be occupied by a three-person household
15 and this DSS client family consists of nine or more
16 people with unended amount of people moving in and
17 out of the home. DSS has allowed an active drug
18 dealer to reside at the addressed premises. DSS has
19 also allowed illegal car rental scheme being brought
20 to our community. DSS has also allowed an illegal
21 daycare to be operated. The quality of life issues
22 are numerous. From March 2020 to December 2021, Eric
23 Drinkwater, Steven Banks have used many excuses to
24 keep their problematic clients in an illegal rental
25

2 while they are actively harassing us and causing
3 quality of life and safety issues. Post moratorium
4 the Jenkins Administration has now sited the home
5 base to protract this DSS client's illegal stay in
6 the residence. DSS is aware of the client's desire
7 to remain in the illegal residence and have provided
8 them and continue to provide them with a plethora of
9 excuses using the gray areas of social service policy
10 to continue their illegal occupation of the home.

11 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time is expired.

12 DIANNA PERSHAD: And this is simply
13 because the clients were displaced in a black
14 community. On west of the 9th street when the
15 quality of life dropped down, safety issues came to
16 the forefront of DSS. DSS property launched an
17 illegal campaign and eviction of homeless clients
18 even with a backlog to move these clients from being
19 a nuisance in a Caucasian community, all of whom are
20 in legal housing. We are here to demand the removal
21 of this illegal DSS client family. We are demanding
22 equal treatment and equal protection under the Law
23 and we are seeking your intervention by way of
24 investigation and replacing policies and legislation
25 in place, eradicating these gray areas of social

2 service laws that allow both DSS personnel and
3 clients alike to arbitrarily work protection set
4 aside to go against landlord abuses and illegal
5 rental arrangement thereby allowing for the
6 furthering of fraud in an illegal rental arrangement
7 as well as to circumvent this treatment which
8 continues to disproportionately affect black and
9 brown communities when the same overtures are not
10 being employed by DSS in predominately communities.

11 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Ms. Preshad,
12 Ms. Pershad.

13 DIANNA PERSHAD: Yes?

14 CHAIRPERSON DIANA PERSHAD: Thank you.

15 DIANNA PERSHAD: Hello? Hello?

16 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: Yes.

17 DIANNA PERSHAD: We would like to know
18 what actions will be . . .

19 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time is, your time is up.
20 Your time is expired miss.

21 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay,
22 thank you Dianna Pershad for your testimony. Now I'm
23 going to call on the final panelist for panel Katrina
24 Corbell to testify.

25 SGT. MARTINEZ: Clock is ready.

2 KATRINA CORBELL: Thank you. Hi, my name
3 is Katrina Corbell. I currently live in the Bronx.
4 I am a member with SHOUT which stands for the
5 Supportive Housing Organized and United Tenants as
6 well as a handful of other non-profits some of which
7 have been named already. I also am a member of the
8 COVID-19 long haulers advocacy project. I have
9 volunteered with both the federal as well as the New
10 York State and City groups. Today, I am testifying
11 because of my personal COVID-19 experience in March
12 of 2020 which also led to the ongoing post-COVID
13 pulmonary emboli and then what became known now as
14 long COVID and the acronym I always forget. I became
15 eligible to apply for ERAP because of my higher
16 medical costs, the higher utility costs because of
17 how we all had to stay in our homes the entire summer
18 basically. For me, I had to stay in my home a lot
19 longer than high. The higher utility costs
20 specifically. In addition to the ERAP or prior to
21 the ERAP I was mainly applying for it because of the
22 utility but also I wanted to point out the clause
23 that affects the lower poverty people like below 30
24 percent AMI in that we wouldn't get the rent portion
25 because our rent was either subsidized by one of the

2 numerous government agencies. In my situation, my
3 rent was fronted by HRA and is going to be paid back
4 by me own SSI so I am still paying my rent but I am
5 not going to be, my rent is not going to be
6 reimbursed. Like, I am still paying my own rent.
7 I'm asking for help for my utilities and I know some
8 non-profits will offer utility assistance but then
9 you guys would not be able to count me in your
10 statistics. We would not be able to hear my
11 testimony. Other people applied for ERAP and was
12 able to receive rental assistance but were denied
13 utility assistance. And so I don't know where their
14 statistic counts either. I haven't even seen my
15 friends in that area be on this committee today. I
16 don't know if they were aware that this Council
17 Meeting existed or what happened or if they're even
18 being asked to follow up. I wish I could give
19 another two minutes to counter the testimony from
20 DSS. I will gladly do that in another day. The HRA
21 helpline is a joke. I will spend an hour on hold and
22 then be hung up on. So I look forward to future
23 testimonies and future meetings with you guys from
24 SHOUT on other areas at that need desperate
25 improvement. Thank you.

2 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
3 you so much Katrina for that testimony. Now I'm
4 going to call up our next panel. Our next panel will
5 be in the following order, Tamara Holliday, followed
6 by Sarah Block followed by Kristie Ortiz. Over to
7 Tamara.

8 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

9 TAMARA HOLLIDAY: Thank you Madam Chair
10 and this committee for the opportunity to testify.
11 I'm Tamara Holliday, Senior Staff Attorney of the
12 Civil Justice Practice at Defender Services. The
13 statewide eviction moratorium protected vulnerable
14 tenants and their families from eviction and
15 homelessness during an unprecedented health crisis.
16 Many families who are facing housing insecurity and
17 permanent displacement before the pandemic had
18 temporary relief with the moratorium. The fallout of
19 the end of the eviction moratorium lands
20 disproportionately on the city's most vulnerable
21 communities. While most jobs have recovered in New
22 York City that recovery has been uneven. Many of our
23 clients work in industries that were shattered during
24 the pandemic and have not recovered at nearly the
25 same rate. Also, many of our clients are unable to

return to their previous jobs because they still suffer from the lingering health effects from COVID. The city must prioritize creating more affordable housing. The affordable housing lottery as of 2018 had a one in 593 chance of success for each person applying for an affordable unit. Even if someone succeeds in obtaining affordable housing from the lottery, the ability to afford those units is uncertain. We also urge the City and HRA to waive the shelter requirement for CityFEPs. Families who are eligible for public assistance or who's income falls within the federal poverty guidelines should be able to be assessed for CityFEPs even if they never lived in shelter. This requirement unnecessarily imposes the trauma of a shelter stay on families while burdening the City with the cost of providing their shelter. Finally, we urge the city to consider an agreement where it pays a portion of the tenant's rental arrears in consideration for the landlord not pursuing a money judgment against the tenant. Many of our clients have or will have the burden of trying to find an apartment with a money judgment. Because these judgements are another barrier to securing housing it will inevitably force families into

2 shelters. In those cases it will be cheaper for the
3 city to pay these arrears than to provide shelter.

4 We thank Madam Chair and this Committee for the
5 opportunity to appear today and discuss these issues.

6 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
7 you Tamara. Going to now move to Sarah Block for
8 testimony. Over to Sarah.

9 SGT. MARTINEZ: The clock is ready.

10 KRISTIE ORTIZ: Good afternoon. I'm
11 Kristie Ortiz. I'll be presenting testimony for
12 Brooklyn A.

13 AMINTA KILAWAN: Understood. So I now
14 will call Kristie Ortiz.

15 KRISTIE ORTIZ: So my name is Kristie
16 Ortiz Lamb and I am the Director of Housing Agreement
17 for Brooklyn A. Brooklyn A is a proud member of the
18 coalition comprised of community based legal services
19 providers working in collaboration to serve no
20 income, low income and moderate income New Yorkers.
21 We believe that members play issues with roles with
22 the Right to Counsel as well as the anti-harassment
23 tenant program. We approach this work as community
24 lawyers and emphasize the importance of sustainable
25 caseloads, sufficient resources to support homeless

2 client services and fighting the fight against tenant
3 harassment and displacement beyond individual
4 eviction cases. These are essentials to protecting
5 our communities and ensuring the tenants can remain
6 in their homes. The New York Moratorium, residential
7 evictions went in place in March 2020 to recognize
8 the hardship and stress caused by the COVID 19 crisis
9 which in turn became a worldwide pandemic. During
10 almost two years followed extensions the moratorium
11 allowed tenants deserving of protection free of
12 displacement. The tenants we represent are low
13 income and many are living paycheck to paycheck prior
14 to the pandemic. When the pandemic hit, it
15 drastically changed. A moratorium based tenant had
16 an immense impact on tenants and legal services
17 provided and that the eviction stayed allowing
18 tenants the opportunity to find employment,
19 alternative housing or secure funds for payment of
20 arrears rather than facing eviction during a
21 worldwide pandemic. Since the moratorium was lifted
22 on January 15, 2022 eviction proceedings were able to
23 move forward. Tenants who have no income due to the
24 pandemic had no recourse under the law and because
25 they could not afford their apartment anymore

2 therefore they were made homeless in an abrupt way.
3 The moratorium lifted on January 15th and sometimes
4 were evicted by January 31st. While the court
5 initiated administrative orders and directions it
6 wasn't class where it was prior to March 2020, a lot
7 of them are already in legal predicament and the
8 pandemic made things worse. So the benefit of the
9 moratorium is evident in one of many success stories
10 with the clients we represent during the pandemic.
11 This particular client was laid off when the pandemic
12 started and found two part time jobs to try to make
13 ends meet. Her . . .

14 SGT. MARTINEZ: Time expired.

15 KRISTIE ORTIZ LAMB: Time?

16 SGT. MARTINEZ: Yes.

17 KRISTIE ORTIZ LAMB: Can you reset those
18 two minutes. Just kidding.

19 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: If you can get
20 it wrapped up.

21 KRISTIE ORTIZ LAMB: Okay. So I will
22 wrap up. I have some suggestions where I think would
23 actually initiate protections for tenants and
24 landlords and one is at the federal, city, state add
25 additional funding for ERAP. Also the HRA allow one

2 shot deal applications simultaneously with ERAP
3 applications which I heard earlier is the practice
4 but I have seen different so I'm hoping that that
5 actually becomes reality and the last thing is that
6 OCJ will allow cases that we are taking on as Right
7 to Counsel, that would allow us an opportunity to
8 adequately defend the evicted tenants. Thank you so
9 much.

10 AMINTA KILAWAN, COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank
11 you so much Kristie for that testimony and to every
12 member of the public who has testified today. At
13 this point we if have inadvertently missed anyone who
14 would like to testify, if you can please use the Zoom
15 Raise Hand Function and we will call you in the order
16 in which your hand is raised. Okay. Seeing no hands
17 raised, Chair Ayala we have concluded public
18 testimony for this hearing. I'll now turn to you
19 Chair Ayala for any closing remarks and then to close
20 the hearing.

21 CHAIRPERSON DIANA AYALA: I just want to
22 thank everyone for not only coming but for staying so
23 long, to run the testimony. I think that this is a
24 constructive hearing, a lot of information was
25 shared. A lot of really great recommendations and I

2 want to once again, you know, highlight the work of
3 all the advocates. We really wouldn't be able to do
4 this work without you and your expertise so thank you
5 all for coming and with that I want to thank Council
6 Yeger and Riley for staying and sticking it out
7 through the end even though he's not even supposed to
8 be here. That is great. With that, our hearing is
9 closed. Thank you.

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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 8, 2022